

# THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1886.

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## LADY VALERIA.

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### CHAPTER XXVIII.

#### LADY VALERIA'S LAST VISITOR.

"DADDY," said Hester, perching herself on Sir John's knee, "I want you to do something for me."

"What sort of something? Must it be done now, or may I get my tea first?"

They were in Sir John's own special sanctum; a matted little den at the back of the house, with bits of old barrack furniture about, piles of newspapers neatly filed, pipes and sticks. Here he read, smoked, and did bits of carpentering with Hester; and here she had brought him his tea, having a boon to beg, and knowing by experience the atmosphere to be propitious. The General was now reposing in his own big chair, with his own special huge china tea-cup steaming on the low bamboo table at his elbow, when between it and him Hester interposed herself.

"That tea is too hot for mortal lips yet. Listen Daddy. I want you to take me to pay a visit."

"Pay visits! Ugh! I thought we were to have a ride this evening. There's a little mare I saw to-day I should like to see you on, Het. Brabant *would* buy her, though she's no more up to Mrs. B.'s weight than a grasshopper."

"I wouldn't change Tom-tit for all Tattersall's, and you know it. You are only trying to evade the question. Will you take me somewhere, and soon—before Mamma comes home? *Do—o—o* say 'Yes,' Daddy!" and Hester smoothed his grey moustache daintily with her finger-tips and put a kiss on it.

"Where's it to be?" enquired Sir John, resignedly, looking at her with delighted eyes.

"I want to go and see Mabel Brant. Mamma won't go. It's no

use waiting to ask her. She would make a fuss about the etiquette of calling and say she doesn't know Lady Valeria Meynell, or something."

Sir John put her off his knee and rose hastily. He crossed the room to the window and stood looking out at nothing, with his face turned away from his astonished little daughter.

"Lady—who did you say? What's *she* got to do with your friends?" he asked, clearing his throat.

"She's Mabel's mother. She has lent them her house during the session. Lord Charlie is member for Southport," Hester answered, amazed.

Sir John did not speak for awhile, then muttering something about "the weather holding up," he returned to his chair and began stirring his tea with an unsteady hand, sending it splashing over into the saucer.

"Hold up? Of course it will hold up, for days to come. Why not, Daddy?" But he only put the tea to his lips and set it down untasted, and a second time crossed the room and stood with his back to her.

"What relation is your de Cressy to the Meynells?" he asked, in an elaborately casual manner.

"Lady Valeria is his cousin. Do you know her, Daddy?"

"I? Not I! How the deuce should I know her? Confound that tea. I've burnt my mouth."

"Daddy," spoke Hester, impressively, "don't try to deceive me. You have done so once or twice in your life and have always been sorry after—haven't you? If you don't want to take me to see Mabel say so, and I'll trust you for the reason, but don't pretend you haven't got one. It was the fib burnt your mouth, not the tea."

"I declare to you, Hester, I don't know Lady Valeria from Adam!"

"I should think you might though—if you saw the two together," was the calm rejoinder.

"And I'll take you there whenever you please—as soon as you can get ready. There!"

Hester waited for no second thoughts. She was at the door in visiting array as soon as the hansom.

Sir John was absolutely silent the whole way till they turned into Seagrave Place.

"Shall we see Lady Valeria, Het?" he asked, pulling his moustache meditatively. "If there's any chance of that I won't go in."

"Why, are you afraid of her?"

"No, little girl. You must trust me for my reasons as you said just now."

Lady Charles Brant was at home, sitting disconsolately in the open drawing-room window, arrayed in sad green, with a lapful of Art needle-work. She sent crewels and patterns showering to the ground

when Hester was announced, and came flying to the door to receive her.

"You *angel*!" she cried, with a headlong rush that nearly landed her in Sir John's arms. "I mean you, Hester, of course," adjusting her glasses, which had as usual flown over one shoulder in her wild career. "How sweet of you to come! I'll get you into focus presently. I was going mad from solitary confinement."

"How is your mother?" asked Hester when they had found seats.

"My dear! how should I know? I'm never let go near her. If I go to the door she's always either asleep or expecting the doctor. If I *do* get into the room, I'm found to be too exciting and get ordered out again. I know I'm a bad nurse, and am always upsetting things, and can never tell one bottle from another, so I suppose they're right; but it's very miserable all the same. And Charlie is too wretched about the future of the country under Gladstone's administration—we are all rushing to destruction you know—to be able to spare me an atom of sympathy."

Hester consoled with her a little, and then went back to her point. "Is Lady Valeria really too ill to see anyone?" she asked, anxiously.

"I don't know. Perhaps it's only me they object to. Oliver says I nearly killed her by taking her to Folkestone, but she was ready enough to go, and we were very quietly happy together there, till she saw Mr. Poynter one day; and Oliver came down and abused him and me like pickpockets, and took her back to town next morning."

"Oh, Mabel, won't you do me a great great favour!" cried Hester, stung to fresh effort by Edric's name. "Won't you take a message to your mother from me, unless indeed she is too ill to hear it? If she were to die——"

"Die! But does anyone think *that*? I thought Oliver only meant to frighten me. Have *you* heard anything about her? What makes you look so strange?" adjusting her pince-nez with a trembling hand in the effort to read Hester's face. "Have you come to break anything to me?"

"Why, how *could* I?" Hester expostulated. "I only know what you have just been telling me yourself——"

"I haven't seen her to-day," Mabel interrupted, looking at her in affright. "I ought to have insisted on staying this morning, but Constance was so obstinate, and the Kirkpatricks sent for me for quartette practice. Oh, I'm a blind, selfish wretch! I'll go directly. Constance *shan't* keep me out!" And, with a "Wait till I come back," she dashed from the room with a bang of the door that set all the crystal drops ringing on the lustres and the glass shades rattling on their stands.

"Hester, it strikes me that we oughtn't to be here under the circumstances," hazarded Sir John.

"Oh, Daddy, if I only knew what to do! if she isn't really ill I must see her somehow! and if she is,—why it's ten times more necessary," and Hester wrung her hands in an agony of indecision.

"Must see her? Must? What's this mystery, my little girl? It's not like you, Het. Come, we'd better go. Visitors can't be wanted here just now." Sir John spoke with his authoritative tone, to which all, even Hester, must needs attend.

"Daddy, dear Daddy, just trust me this once! It's a fair bargain. I'll never ask your reasons for not wanting to meet Lady Valeria if you'll trust mine for wishing to see her. It isn't my affair or I'd tell you in a minute."

Sir John was still looking at her doubtfully, pulling his grey moustache in hesitation, when a sudden outbreak of noise startled both.

A sound of footsteps and voices without, and one voice above all raised in tones of imperative command, and then the door burst open to admit Mabel Brant, who came running up to them all scared and tearful.

"I don't know what to do! I've said something—or else it was Constance—that has agitated her dreadfully. She says such terrible things about our keeping people from her, as if I'd do any such thing! and she has got up and will come down here, and Oliver is to go at once for Mr. Stannard and bring him back. Not our own clergyman, or even Lionel, but this Mr. Stannard! Who *can* he be? And Oliver! Oh, he *is* angry! Oh, I wish Charlie were at home, he wouldn't let me be spoken to in this way." She stopped to wipe her eyes, and listened for a second.

"There, there! she's coming. You won't be offended, but *do* go. They *mustn't* find you here!"

The Archdales were as anxious to depart as she was to see them go, and were hastening to the door when she stopped them.

"Not that way. You'll meet her. Go in here and out by the other door when she has passed."

They withdrew accordingly by another door which opened into Lady Valeria's little sitting-room. The footsteps drew nearer, and standing within the doorway Hester could see the whole of the other room reflected in the great glass opposite. A little crowd at the doorway grew distinct as she gazed, and she recognised the tall figure of Lady Valeria half leaning on, half urging forward a woman in the dress of a professional nurse, who looked grimly irresponsible, and followed by Mrs. Meynell anxiously expostulating. Then came a maid with a load of wraps and cushions, and lastly the butler with an air of injured dignity, bearing a silver salver covered with cards.

Hester watched the little procession safely into the room, then softly tried to open the door to the landing. It was locked outside. The whole place had an air of being half dismantled, and the room had doubtless been shut up since Lady Valeria's absence. She noiselessly made Sir John aware of the difficulty.



"We can't get out this way."

"We *must*, Het! What a deuced awkward position! Suppose you or I sneezed ——"

"Perhaps I can signal to Mabel for help," and she crossed back on tip-toe to the drawing-room door again.

Lady Valeria had sunk into a great chair by the window, and someone had flung a scarlet and gold shawl around her, out of which her worn face looked ghastly white. She had ordered the nurse off, and sat listening with a gloomy, absent face to her daughter-in-law's protestations, now and then casting an impatient glance at Lady Charles, who was sobbing on an ottoman in the middle of the room. In the background the butler bore aloft his salver, impassive and unnoticing, as a well-bred butler should be.

"I am not dead yet, Constance, and while I live I will be mistress here," she spoke, feebly and emphatically. "You and Oliver mean well; of course you do; but how should you know who have a right to be admitted to me?" Her voice gave way before she finished speaking. "*What* was that name you said?" she asked the maid, with an effort.

"Name, my lady. Did you say what *name*?" faltering and glancing at Mrs. Meynell for a suggestion. "I don't remember naming *any* name, my lady."

Lady Valeria sat upright suddenly, trembling violently, and deathly pale.

"You are false, false! One and all of you!" she cried, excitedly; then, with a sharp cry of pain, sank back gasping and struggling for breath, beating frantically at Mrs. Meynell when she drew near.

The nurse came back with some restorative which she administered sternly. "If you *will* excite yourself, my lady, I cannot be answerable to Dr. Diarmid for the consequences. Now, hadn't you better come right away up-stairs ——"

"Go away!" commanded Lady Valeria, recovering her composure somewhat; "and you—come here."

The butler approached obediently. His mistress lifted a card or two with a shaking hand from the salver.

"Read them. No. Mabel, come, you read them."

"D—D—Dr. Moncrieff," "Lady Lingard," "The Dean of St. Stephen's and Lady Agatha Pratt," "Mr. Beverley-Bateman," she read, wiping her eyes between each name as she put down the card. Her mother sat listening fixedly, her eyes glancing furtively, now at the cards, now at her daughter-in-law's face, now dropped on her own restless fingers, fraying and picking at the gold fringe of her shawl. "Is that all?" she asked, when Mabel had reached the last.

"That is all, my lady, excepting Mr. Stannard's, which Mr. Meynell took up to you himself, and the gentleman's which, through some mismanagement, came into Miss Harris's hands unknown to me." A

toss of the head from Miss Harris repaid the accent of disparagement accompanying the last words.

"Is he coming?" asked Lady Valeria, restlessly turning her head to the window. "How long is it since Oliver went?"

"Not long, mamma. He might possibly overtake him. It was not many minutes after his call that Oliver started," Mrs. Meynell replied, soothingly. Lady Valeria only sighed impatiently.

"I want him. I want him to help me. I have something I must tell you all before I die. He knows it, and shall speak for me. I thought he would come to me. I have waited and waited for him. Harris, did you say no other name beside his?"

"My lady, if I was to die for it, I couldn't bring to mind that I said anything. I may have been speaking of visitors to Lady Charles, my lady," said Harris, fibbing industriously, with an eye to a possible situation with Mrs. Meynell, not to speak of a certain *douceur* from Mr. Oliver.

Lady Valeria turned her head away in sad scorn. "It cannot matter much now," she muttered. "I had a fancy that someone was near me who has the best right to be here. I should like to have died with my hand in his." Constance looked in bewilderment at the nurse, who touched her own forehead and shook her head from behind the chair. "Mr. Stannard shall tell you all."

"I'll go and watch for him, mamma," and Mrs. Meynell gladly hurried away to the more distant window, while Mabel sank down on her knees beside her mother and held her hand.

There was a long interval of silence in the room, endless it seemed to the two involuntary spectators. The nurse, after a few ineffectual suggestions, sat silently watching her charge. The servants had been ordered away out of hearing by Mrs. Meynell, who stood motionless at her post. Mabel sobbed and caressed the hand she held quietly.

Lady Valeria leaned back in her chair, her eyes fixed absently on the narrow sky above the roofs. A lingering ray of western sun slanted across her, catching the splendours of her scarlet and gold embroideries and the glancing diamonds on her fingers. It was reflected in a soft glow on her wasted features, over which a great peace seemed to be slowly settling. As the golden light slowly travelled away from her, her lips even seemed to tremble into a smile, and her eyelids drooped restfully.

There was a sound of wheels, and Constance hastened away to meet the new-comers.

"Mabel," spoke Lady Valeria, very softly, "I have lost the name. It has gone from me. Mr. Stannard will tell you. He was here—not so long ago—and they turned him away."

"Mamma, dear! You are mistaken, indeed. No one has been here. Nobody but Hester and Sir John Archdale——"

"John Archdale!" The name rang through the room like a trumpet call, startling the listeners without, and staying Oliver's foot

on the threshold. She had sprung to her feet and stood erect, her head thrown back, her arms extended, her face alight with sudden rapturous expectation.

"John Archdale! He has come to me at last. At last!" Then with a choking cry she sank back, a white, rigid figure that should never give word or sign in this world again while its life should last.

They came crowding in, nurse, servants, her children, and the hastily summoned doctor. They made her a couch with pillows where she had fallen, and there, amongst the Louis Quatorze gildings and great sheets of shining mirrors, she lay breathing away her last moments, senseless and motionless.

Hester and her father passed unnoticed through the room, and stood without with Eustace Stannard till the Doctor's fruitless ministrations should be over.

"I am John Archdale," said the old General. "Yes, it was my name she called. Poor lady, poor lady!" shaking his kindly old head, and laying his arm round Hester's shoulders tenderly.

Dr. Diarmid rose at last, and came to the door.

"I can do no more for the poor lady, Stannard. She's past minding you, but if you like to try the effect of your priestly offices there's no objection."

Then Hester heard Mabel's voice upraised in a wild outburst of hysterical sobbing, and then, in a pause, the grave tones of Eustace Stannard speaking the Benediction.

"Peace be to this house."

"Amen!" said good old Sir John fervently, as he led his little daughter gently away.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### HOW OLIVER MEYNELL CAME TO ST. FRIDOLIN'S.

A DAY of steady, softly falling rain.

Far away in the country, in the old family vault of the Meynells, Lady Valeria that morning had been laid to her rest. Eustace and de Cressy, newly returned from the funeral, sat in the Vicar's study, making up the morning's arrears of work somewhat languidly and disjointedly, feeling that disinclination to set to anything that a broken day brings forth.

"What brought Sir John Archdale down there, I wonder?" de Cressy asked, as he rose to go. "What has he to do with the Meynells?" He glanced out of the window, where the rain-drops fell thicker and thicker against the pane. "There's a hansom stopping outside," he announced, without waiting for a reply to his first remark, trying to peer through the streaming glass. "I'd better go."

The Vicar heard him putting himself inside his rattling mackintosh in the hall, and soon after a surprised exclamation, "Hullo,

Oliver! *You* here," followed by the entrance of two gentlemen: the first Mr. Meynell, the second, as he had learned that morning, Lord Charles Brant.

Lord Charles was a small, quiet man, with a soft, positive manner. Mr. Meynell introduced him, and left him to explain their presence there, which he did promptly enough.

"I think I am right, Mr. Stannard, in assuming you to have been to a great extent in Lady Valeria Meynell's confidence?" he began, in a clear little voice, low pitched but incisive. Eustace bowed assent.

"We have made a curious discovery amongst her papers. Mr. Meynell, I should tell you, does not attach any importance to it; *I do*; and for *my* satisfaction we have come to you for any assistance you can give us."

"I have been, against my own will, made the recipient of some details of Lady Valeria's personal history," Eustace interposed; "but I tell you candidly, gentlemen, it must be a strong necessity that opens my lips on the subject."

Mr. Meynell, whose eyes had been watching him eagerly since he began to speak, drew a breath of relief, but kept silence.

"That necessity unfortunately exists," Lord Charles went on, in his cool little tone. Will you oblige me by reading this, which we discovered attached loosely to Lady Valeria's deed of settlement," handing a sheet of note-paper folded lengthwise to the Vicar, "and tell us whether you can throw any light upon its meaning."

It was dated the year of Mr. Meynell's death, and ran as follows:

"I, Valeria Mary Meynell, do charge and implore my son, Oliver Meynell, to refrain from exercising any rights given to him by this deed for at least the space of seven years after my death, during which time I beg of him to make diligent search whether anyone exists whom he may be ignorantly defrauding of his birth-right. And I pray him to pardon me for keeping him in ignorance that such a one may exist, as it is done to spare him the torments of doubt that consume me—his wretched mother.

"VALERIA MARY MEYNELL, née de Cressy."

Mr. Stannard read and re-read in silence.

"What do *you* understand by this?" he asked at last.

"Some screw loose about Glenara," Lord Charles answered him, promptly. "Lord Kilmoyne was an unconscionable old scamp in his time. There were all manners of choppings and changes, and buyings and sellings in the last generation, and it would have been very much in his way to swindle the whole Meynell family by keeping an infant heir-at-law in the background. If Lady Valeria suspected it, that explains the mystery. Now I think you cannot honourably refuse to satisfy us whether you have any knowledge of such a possibility."

"Nothing that I can tell will help you," replied Eustace, thoughtfully, inwardly giving thanks for Lord Charles's neat little theory,

which might serve to divert his speculations from a more dangerous direction. He had decided after one moment's anxious debate that Oliver Meynell must know his mother's story, hard as the telling would be, but he could have wished for any other time or place. Mr. Meynell might be a cold, precise, self-sufficient prig, but he had been a good son, and the earth was lying fresh on his mother's coffin. "Shall you set any further enquiries on foot?"

"No," spoke Meynell, abruptly, "certainly not!"

"Then *I* must," declared Lord Charles. "It concerns the honour of the family. I accept it as a sacred charge."

"The family honour should be as safe in my hands as in yours, Charles," spoke Meynell, with sudden anger. "I have given way to you once in coming here, but, by Heaven, I go no farther!" He rose to go. Lord Charles did not budge. His eyes were fixed keenly on Eustace, who felt that a further reply was required of him.

"I am sorry I cannot satisfy you. I can guess the idea with which this was written, and I can assure you that I firmly believe that idea to have been a false one. There you must leave it."

"Out of respect to the secrets of the confessional?" Lord Charles asked, in a tone that was just restrained from being a sneer.

"If you like to put it in that way," the Vicar replied, gravely.

Lord Charles's quick temper was one of the two disturbing elements in Lord Charles's well-regulated, orderly little life. The other was Mabel; but he never allowed either to get beyond his control for long.

"Then, as you say, there we must leave it," he assented, with a forced, courteous smile. "We have no more to ask; have we, Meynell?"

"*I* have," said the banker, unexpectedly, without moving; "if Mr. Stannard can spare me a few minutes."

Lord Charles looked inquisitive, waited to be invited to stay, failing that, bade adieu and left them.

The grey afternoon had darkened in the pause, and the rain-drops dripped heavily from roof and cornice.

"It *must* come now," said Eustace to himself; "he suspects something, and I may never get such another opportunity." Yet he felt he would have given a day of his life to have been spared the telling of that story.

"I see you have become aware of a distressing family secret," began the banker, to Eustace's surprise and relief. "I thank you for respecting it just now. You understood the dilemma which the discovery of that paper placed me in—I mean Brant's knowledge of that discovery. I must either act as if I really believed it worth attention, or go into explanations which, for Mabel's sake, I would gladly avoid."

"You are quite convinced that it is not worth attention?" the Vicar was provoked into enquiring by the coolness of the other's manner.

Mr. Meynell turned to him with eyebrows slightly raised.

"My father was an excellent man of business, not at all likely to let even Lord Kilmoynes jockey him in the fashion Brant suspects. He saw his title to Glenara clear before he sank one penny in the place you may depend. Now we may consider that as disposed of."

"Not yet. Your mother, I know, had at one time a strong conviction that—that there was a prior claim to yours, though you were supposed to be her eldest son."

An awkward, feeble way of putting it; yet surely it would elicit some outbreak of surprise or question. The Vicar sat expectant with down-bent eyes, listening for the next words that should fall from his companion's lips. None came, and he raised his own eyes to Meynell's face, ashen grey in the grey twilight, bitterly chagrined, but still unsurprised, incurious.

"Poor soul! Poor mother!" he sighed, tenderly. "Did you really give any credence to her wandering fancies? Before strangers she was usually self-controlled; indeed I thought it was a secret known only to my father and myself that she was ever otherwise. Even Mabel suspects nothing. It is only recently that I have detected any return of the old trouble. She never gave way in my father's presence; he had immense influence over her; he educated her in fact, formed her mind and character, and she made him a noble helpmate. There was no natural deficiency of intellect. She had a terrible shock in her early girlhood——"

"Her husband's death?" interrupted Eustace.

"Ha? You knew that? How?" eagerly.

"From Lady Valeria herself. I do not think *that* was a mere wandering fancy, nor yet the rest of her sad history. I knew nothing personally of your mother till she came to me, and of her own accord told me the piteous story. Also"—here the Vicar's voice sank and faltered—"she employed me to discover whether her eldest son—her son by her first marriage—were alive or dead."

"*Her son!*" My elder brother! Her son by her first marriage?" Mr. Meynell demanded, hesitatingly, a new expression dawning in his face of alarm mixed with incredulity. "Did you believe it? Were there grounds for any belief in such a thing?"

"You shall judge for yourself. You shall hear what passed between us as well as I can recall it. I have some cipher notes of my first interview with Lady Valeria made that same evening in my diary, and I can trust my memory for the rest."

They lay in his desk under his hand with Arbuthnot Corbett's letters. He took them out and read them at length. Mr. Meynell, except for a pertinent question or two, listening in absolute silence. The gloom deepened outside, the raindrops pattered thicker and faster as the Vicar read. When at last he ceased Mr. Meynell was only a black outline against the bare, white wall, with folded arms and down-bowed head.



"Poor mother! Poor mother!" he sighed at last, softly, in the gloom. "What she must have suffered in concealing this. Why could she not have trusted me?" he broke out, in a tone that was full of sorrow and hurt feeling. "Forgive me—but it seems hard that you—a stranger—should have had this task which was of right mine."

"It came easier to a stranger, perhaps."

"I don't know what more I could have done either," Oliver resumed, after a pause of consideration. "That man's—Stephen Magrath's—death has saved me from a decision. I may leave the mystery unsolved. Had he lived it would have been my duty to seek him out and examine into his claims, now there is no need that the subject should ever again be revived; even Brant need know nothing about it," with a sparkle of satisfaction in his tone. You have acted with singular discretion and good-feeling, Mr. Stannard. I am at a loss for words to express my sense of the service you have done our family. As I plainly told you I have been extremely annoyed by the influence you seemed to have acquired over my mother, and have been doing all in my power to counteract it—I want you to see why I endeavoured to keep you apart. In this case I admit I have been wrong."

"I think you have," was the reply to this magnanimous concession. "Fatally wrong—as far as your own interests are concerned. You left her by so doing entirely at the mercy of this mysterious agent—this Madame Euphrosyne—or Girard—as I suppose her name to be. I do not know what other family secrets may have been confided to her, but I think you may expect her to trade upon her knowledge at the first opportunity."

Meynell looked sceptical. "She would not dare." He evidently considered the subject disposed of. Then searching in his pocket for something: "I want you to look at a photograph I have here, and tell me if you know the original."

Eustace took it from him. It was a large one, once coloured, but faded as by much handling.

"I believe I do. I can't be sure though. It's like a man whom I have met once or twice—Poynter, of the Royal Denbigh." Meynell nodded. "Why, your mother knew him. I met him just outside your house not long ago, the very day she died, and he gave me a curious message. He seemed put out about something."

"This photograph, Mr. Stannard, was fastened into the leaves of the Bible in which my mother read every day, and with this gentleman she had a private interview, evidently a distressing one, at Folkestone, on the night before her return. He came to the house with a wild sort of story on the day you saw him. Now, Mr. Stannard, can you help me to any explanation of this?"

"Not in any way. Believe me I have withheld nothing from you. Your mother never mentioned his name to me."

Mr. Meynell drew a long breath of relief. "I was not always able to be with her, and I imagine in my absence she gave way to unaccountable freaks of liking and disliking people. This may have been one of them. I think I had better see this gentleman at once, and find out the extent of his intimacy with my mother. I will write.—No, I'll go to Shorncliffe at once and see him. He may have been led to form some expectations from my mother's fancy for him. I should like to carry out her wishes as far as is reasonable." He spoke more briskly than he had yet done, and looked for approval to Eustace, on whom, singularly enough, isings seemed to be deepening as they lightened for the other.

"Then that's the last point disposed of?"

"Not quite. There is still Madame Euphrosyne."

"Let her show her face to me and I shall have very little scruple in handing her over to the nearest policeman. I shall take care to be prepared at all points. I shall despatch a confidential agent to America to go exhaustively into the Magraths' history, and another to Ireland to make further enquiries amongst the old tenants—if any survive. Lord Kilmoyne's papers are all in my solicitor's hands. I shall examine them carefully for any details of my mother's first marriage—you know how it was a piece of my grandfather's mad folly never to acknowledge it openly? I have never even heard her first husband's name—have you?"

"Never. She desired to keep it from me. She spoke of him as 'Jack'—nothing more."

Eustace for the first time evaded the other's look. He was closing his understanding obstinately against a sudden fancy that had started up, wild, extravagant and horrible.

"I shall be glad to have it all out!" Meynell went on, almost cheerily. "It's half-told bits of family history and half-hidden family secrets that are the materials for an impostor's case. Depend upon it I shall go into the matter thoroughly."

"It's an ugly business, having to exhume a corpse or a dead secret sometimes," was Eustace's gloomy comment.

"But necessary now and then, eh? When it hasn't been decently buried and the ghost takes to walking?" Oliver picked up his hat in excellent spirits at his own smartness. "Good-bye, Mr. Stannard, you and I will have the satisfaction of knowing that *this* skeleton is securely put away at last, without a chance of resurrection."

CHAPTER XXX.

"COME, LASSES AND LADS!"

LADY VALERIA passed from men's minds before rain and sun and creeping green mould had dimmed the freshness of the mason's work that closed her into the great vault of the Meynells' at Rivington. Her deeds lived after her in the lives of others for good or evil; much of the first—more than has been hinted at here—sufficient it is to be hoped to out-weigh what there might be of the latter. Her death was deplored in many a sermon preached on the following Sunday; in the *Times* obituary; and in the reports of a score of charities. Mabel Brant cried for two whole days without intermission, and then went, cast down but not inconsolable, in strict incognita, with a few kindred spirits, to the great Midlandshire Musical Festival. And Oliver, after telling Lord Charles as much of Eustace's story as it was good for him to know, set to work steadily to dispose of the family skeleton as he had proposed, collecting its scattered bones, so to speak, and preparing to read the Burial Service over it. Eustace was doing his best to forget it all as speedily as he could. He caught himself wondering once or twice whether he should ever hear the result of Meynell's visit to Shorncliffe, and he felt a curious repugnance to meeting the Archdales, which he decided must be overcome at once, without question.

A great friendliness had been slowly but surely growing up between the ex-rivals in Rose's regard. Hester could afford to cast aside her jealousy of the Vicar now that Rose was as hopelessly lost to him as to her. Some dim suggestion of the truth was growing up in her mind that made her guard her words more carefully when Rose and her friends came under discussion, and thrill with pity when she caught the sudden light in his eyes when the name passed her lips.

Many messages anent St. Fridolin and its concerns came to Hester. Once or twice a formal one direct to him, always received with inordinate secret rejoicing, despite himself. He emptied the vials of his own self-contempt on his head as he thought of it, and then began to wonder, as he entered the Archdales' drawing-room, whether there had been time for another letter to have been received since his last visit. Lady Archdale received him. She gently discoursed about the weather and her headaches, and at last calmly mentioned and glided over "that sad affair at the Meynells," to the relief of both her hearers. Hester had entered meanwhile, with a foreign letter in her hand he felt convinced.

"How do your Saturday evening lectures prosper?" he asked, his eyes determinedly averted.

"Just what Rose wants to know, and I don't know how to answer. We had Miss Coutell here at luncheon in the worst possible spirits.

The girls *won't* take an intelligent interest in 'Art, Hygiene and Domestic Economy.' They all seem to be drifting apart again, and I can't help it. They miss Rose so woefully."

Mr. Stannard looked sympathetic, but did not trust himself to speak.

"That dreadful bank-holiday!" she went on. "Last Whitmonday Rose only took the friendless girls with her, you know. This time she wants them all to join, and I don't believe the place exists that will suit them. Most of them want the country, or the seaside, or, as a compromise, the river. Little Lydia Hicks—the pale girl with a pocket always bulging out with penny dreadfuls—is yearning for ruins, or a castle, and has infected some of the others. Lotty begs for a band and fireworks, and so do half-a-dozen others. Must we try Rosherville? Will you chaperon us, mother, if Mr. Stannard and Mr. de Cressy come too?"

"Indeed, Hester, you must leave them to themselves in any case. I can't think of your going anywhere with twenty girls in a gang on a bank-holiday!"

"It does seem an unmanageable undertaking," Hester admitted with a sigh. "But Rose trusted them to me, and I know they'll all do whatever I suggest. Only I haven't a suggestion left in me. Or if I had a plan I don't know how I could carry it out."

From her babyhood upwards, nobody had ever heard such a frank confession of total incapacity from Hester's lips before. Even Lady Archdale was startled and touched.

"My dear, I really wish I could help you," she began.

"I think I see my way," spoke Eustace suddenly. "If *you* really will help us, Lady Archdale, *that*," with an inspiration of diplomacy, "would remove the only obstacle in the way."

Lady Archdale looked interested but neutral. She was at heart always glad to please Hester, when she was sure it could be done without involving personal exertion or violation of her own precise little code of social laws.

"Don't you think a day at Altcar might suit all views? We have river enough for a water party, and the ruins of Ingilby Castle within a walk. Then there are the gardens and conservatories to see, and, now I think of it, there is the Foresters' Fête coming off somewhere in the neighbourhood, so even a band and fireworks might prove attainable."

Hester clapped her hands delightfully.

Lady Archdale began to demur. "But your mother ——"

"Will you let me write and consult her? I am very sure, though, that *your* party will be more than welcome."

"My party!" Lady Archdale seemed to shy at the responsibility at first, but being gently led to approach and examine it, ended by allowing herself to be saddled therewith. Then they fell to discussing details and calculating postal deliveries till they finally settled that

the Vicar's scheme, if practicable, might be presented in form to the audience of Miss Coutell's next Saturday evening lecture, time being short and precious. The plan was suggested by an impulse of sheer good-nature on Eustace's part, and of all concerned he was the one who cared least about the expedition; yet, oddly enough, in the result, that day's work was to have no small bearing on his life's future bliss or bale.

His letter to Altcar brought forth the response he had calculated on, in the shape of a telegram of welcome followed by a perfectly rapturous epistle from Mary Liddell, closely written, many paged, and filled with much matter for reflection of various sorts.

"I am so glad that you are coming, if only that you may tell me whether I am fanciful in seeing a change in Lord Altcar. He seems to me to have grown strangely restless, talks oddly about the property, and wearies for news of Randolph.

"Mr. Renwick says such anxiety is only natural just now. We have many fears and little news of Randolph. His wife indeed writes, but not reassuringly. Her last letter was full of indignation at 'everybody'—the Southsea everybody—'expecting her to decline an invitation to a Fancy Dress Ball, under the circumstances.' N.B. The circumstances, whatever they might be, were too unimportant to mention."

Eustace stopped to smile at this scintillation of feminine malice in Mary's gentle little chronicle.

"Mr. Renwick speaks quite severely about poor Mrs. Randolph. He declares that her place is here, that the house and the parish want a lady at their head, and you know, dear Mr. Stannard, I could not put myself forward to be that. Mr. Renwick had found a trained lady-nurse for your mother, a Mrs. Burnett, an officer's widow. She has lost her only son in Afghanistan, and when she speaks of him I can see a look in your mother's eyes that tells me she is thinking of her own boy in Alexandria and the perils that may surround him. This makes a great bond of union between them, so that I might almost consider my occupation gone. Dear Esmée is undoubtedly the better for the change in every way, and I am happy and thankful to be superseded thus. As Mr. Renwick said in a beautiful sermon last Sunday ——"

"Renwick indeed!" Eustace broke off, with a laugh. "Five Mr. Renwicks in a page! This must be seen to."

The letter ended "Send me the names of all the girls. I want to send a proper invitation to each. I have already written in Esmée's name to Lady Archdale, so I hope we have compromised her beyond all possibility of retreat."

Lady Archdale did look finally and helplessly committed to the undertaking when she and Hester appeared on the following Saturday evening, a few minutes before the gathering of Miss Coutell's audience in the parish room.

To them entered presently the Vicar with a handful of cream-tinted, gold-bedight envelopes, one of which he presented to the little lecturess.

She laughed and read it, and shook her wise little head. "It's uncommonly kind of your people to wish for the pleasure of my company, but my vision of a holiday doesn't contain the shadow of a girl in it." She was going to pocket it, but stopped with a stony stare at the card that struck Eustace with terror.

"Anything wrong? Do let me see it. 'Miss Coutell and friend.' I suppose my father thought you might wish to bring somebody. Isn't it right? We are old-world, out-of-the-world people at Altcar."

"Well," and the little lady sighed resignedly, "you will have to make it very clear that it means a female friend, that's all."

"Must I?" he enquired, dubiously. "I don't think any limit was intended."

"There may be brothers," hazarded Lady Archdale, perplexed.

"They can't be brothers to all the other girls."

"Let us accept the situation," spoke Eustace, daringly. "There may be sweethearts. Why not?"

Lady Archdale looked at Miss Coutell, Miss Coutell looked at Lady Archdale. Then both looked at the Vicar with a gaze under which even he wavered, but Hester made reply for him.

"I suppose I might go with a sweetheart, if I had one. Why not the girls? I will answer for the good behaviour of every one. There are all sorts among them, I know, but Lady Altcar agrees to accept all sorts, and I am sure they will be alike in this, not a girl will bring forward anybody who won't do her credit—for Rose's sake."

It was getting time to decide, for approaching voices were heard without, and Mrs. Goodliffe bustled in with a message to the Vicar.

Before anyone could interfere, Hester had picked up her invitation, and handed it to her.

Down to the ground curtsied the worthy soul at the sight of the cream-and-gold compliment paid her, hastily rummaging for her spectacles. "And a friend! That is thoughtful now!" she exclaimed. "If I might take the liberty, ma'am, Miss Sparks—most respectable—has charge of warehouses ——"

"May they all prove to be respectable Miss Sparkses," was Miss Coutell's comment, as the door opened and the first of her audience entered.

So the invitations were distributed, and replies requested to be sent in not later than the following Saturday.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## "MISSING."

ALL the girls were ready with their replies long before the week was out, and the Vicar, glancing over the list, smiled to himself to see how Hester's confidence had been justified. Saddest of all seemed the few girls who had no friend to bring. More than half the rest brought other girls, sisters, fellow-workers. "Mother" came in two or three cases, and in one "Grannie" vouched for as being equal to anything in the way of gaiety. Of the dreaded men-friends there came a father, a doubtful uncle, and two brothers. There remained three, unquestionably engaged to their fair introducers, but, as after close enquiry nothing else could be found against them, the Vicar thought that might be over-looked. Altogether he did not fear to present himself with the list at Lady Archdale's.

He made a solemn resolution that Rose's name should not pass his lips this time, if he could possibly help it, and kept sternly away from Hester and her tea-cups for at least ten minutes.

"Look at my Edelweiss," Hester said, suddenly. "Did you ever see such over-rated stuff?"

"From Mrs. Damien?" he asked, his eyes greedily devouring the fluffy, weedy contents of the box she was opening.

"Not exactly. It doesn't grow on the Boulevards. Why, you heard me telling Miss Coutell on Saturday—or if you didn't it was because you *wouldn't* listen," was Hester's mental parenthesis—"Rose is in Paris."

He waited to hear more, with a look which Hester was beginning dimly to understand.

"They had got as far as Stachelberg. Lady Monchalsea broke down suddenly, nobody knows what ailed her, and nobody knew what to do with her, till Rose, with her usual taste for making a social martyr of herself, actually brought her back to Paris; only just in time as it happened. There is a doctor there whom she had consulted before, and he says a second attack might have prevented her travelling home at all. Of course Teddy Boughton is in attendance on his mother," with a malicious glance at the Vicar's impassive countenance.

"And Professor Montrose?" he asked, though his heart seemed to stand still with the effort.

"Professor Montrose is on his way—to the Danube," she ended, her last words lost in the bustle of her mother's entrance.

She was in a greater flutter than usual this day. Her consent had already been many a time repented, and as the day drew near, her misgivings multiplied beyond all her daughter's powers of reassurance.

When some vexed point had been settled finally for the twentieth time, the Vicar rose to go.

"Sir John's compliments and will you please see him for a few minutes before your leave," said Markham, appearing at the door.

"What can Daddy want with you?" wondered Hester. "You know he has begged off going! Perhaps it's to ask to be taken now. He's ashamed to come to me."

Sir John was standing at the foot of the stairs. "I want you for a minute," he said, without other greeting. "Hush! come this way." Eustace followed in obedient silence to the little back room, where Sir John carefully closed the door and locked it before speaking a word. He took a newspaper out of his pocket, and began to unfold it with an unsteady hand.

"I've been regularly upset by a piece of news here. It's a local paper that someone has sent me. It'll all be in the *Times* to-morrow, and I'm at my wits' end how to keep it from them. You know what Amelia is—and to think we only saw the poor lad a few days ago. There, there, read it for yourself. He was a friend of yours, wasn't he? or of Mrs. Damien's—you're all in the same boat—Poor boy! Poor boy!" Sir John pushed the paper towards Eustace with a sort of groan, and dropped heavily into his chair. He, turning to a conspicuously marked column, read in large type:

"MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE."

and below:—

"DISAPPEARANCE OF AN OFFICER OF THE ROYAL DENBIGH. LATEST PARTICULARS.

"Much excitement has been caused in Shorncliffe and its neighbourhood by the sudden disappearance of a well-known and popular young Officer, Lieut. Poynter, of the Royal Denbigh regiment, which left the camp yesterday for Portsmouth en route for Egypt. Last Monday the missing gentleman went up to town, it is ascertained for the purpose of making some last preparations. He was seen at two shops. (Names and addresses in full.) At the latter he mentioned that he should return to Shorncliffe by the six o'clock train, and ordered that a certain parcel should be sent to meet him at the Charing Cross station. He is known to have been at the Army and Navy Stores, and later on at the office of Messrs. Cox and Co. Here he interchanged a few words with a friend, and here we lose all trace of him. The mystery of his absence deepens with each day, and it is now impossible to resist the conclusion that only some serious fatality or foul play can account for it. Mr. Poynter was the second son of the late Dean of Leominster. His elder brother is attaché to the embassy at St. Petersburg."

Lower down came,

"FURTHER PARTICULARS.—The gentleman who last saw Mr. Poynter was Major Power, of the Engineers. He informs us that he walked from Craig's Court towards the City with the ill-fated gentleman as far as the Bank, where they parted: Major Power to meet a friend at Liverpool Street, and Mr. Poynter to keep a business appointment—in Lombard Street—according to Major Power's belief."

"What do you make of it?" demanded Sir John, hardly giving Eustace time to glance over it. "Confound these papers with their

penny-a-lining bloodthirsty suggestions. Nothing *could* happen to a man in Lombard Street on a Monday afternoon. Unless he was run over and carried off insensible. By Jove! that might account for it, though. Why don't they try the hospitals first? If I could only get off quietly, I'd run down to Shorncliffe and say a word to the Colonel. I forgot though—they're at Portsmouth by this time. That fool of an editor! He daren't have put that trash in if Borrodale had been about. It'll be all over the country in a day or two." Sir John looked up appealingly in Eustace's face. "What am I to tell Amelia?—and Hetty? She'll be as sorry as I am. We both took a liking to that boy. So like what his father was at his age. My old friend Welbore—No, that was his uncle; I'm always forgetting—Poor lad, poor lad!"

"Lombard Street?" said the Vicar, inattentively. "Have you a Post Office Directory here?"

Sir John looked almost wrathful. "There, on that shelf. What the deuce has that to do with poor Poynter?"

"Not much, I am afraid; but it may help us to one point. 'Bankers.' Here it is. 'Meynell, Meynell and Mott, Lombard Street.' I thought so. Sir John I think I can perhaps carry the trace of your friend one step farther. It's only a chance. I am making a guess at where he might have gone after parting with Major Power. I can go and ask the question at any rate."

"You'll come back at once, or telegraph?"

"Don't expect too much. Whatever I find you shall know of it."

"Good luck to you. I shall say nothing to Amelia or Hetty till I see you again. If I'm only let keep it to myself, that is."

Eustace started off with no very clear idea of what he expected to learn from Mr. Meynell. He had wondered once or twice what the result of the banker's meeting with Edric had been, but had been quite content to hear no more of the matter. Now, he felt he knew enough to justify at least an enquiry; Meynell himself would hardly deny that.

Mr. Meynell was in his private office and disengaged. He looked ill and worn, and pushed aside some papers, as he rose to greet Eustace, with an impatient sigh, as if this interruption were only one more care added to the burden under which he laboured. Eustace had no desire to prolong the infliction, and came at once to the point, assisted by the fact that a daily paper with a marked paragraph uppermost lay on the table before him.

"Young Poynter's disappearance?" replied the banker, wearily, to his first remark. "Yes, of course I have heard of it. Most extraordinary thing—but you are the second person who has been here to-day about it. The other came from Scotland Yard, I believe. *Why*, unless they are making a house to house visitation throughout Lombard Street, I can't conceive."

"Then you have no reason to suspect Mr. Poynter was coming here on that day?"

"My dear sir, why *should* he come here? Oh, I see, you are thinking of our last interview. Yes—yes, I certainly expressed an intention then of making his acquaintance."

"You certainly expressed more interest in him then than you do now," said the Vicar, and then felt himself to be uncivil, as he always did sooner or later in Mr. Meynell's company.

He did not seem offended, but passed his hand wearily over his forehead. "So many things have happened since then. I have had much to occupy my mind—harassing, vexatious matters. You must forgive me if I did not at once recall all the circumstances you allude to. Yet it is not so long ago, either. It was the day—the day of my mother's funeral."

Something in his face and manner always became, if not more conciliatory, at least less ungenial, whenever he alluded to his mother, or to Eustace's connection with her. "Let me think. I had an impression, you know, that he might prove a sort of—of protégé of my mother's. Someone she had taken a chance fancy to. I was prevented from going to see him as I intended, and when I went down to Shorncliffe on Tuesday he had, as you see, already gone."

"Gone, but where? Did you make no enquiries?"

"How could I tell," replied Oliver, rather snappishly. "And what could I do? I saw his Colonel, who didn't seem quite to know what to do either. He said Mr. Poynter had asked for leave some short time previously—said that nothing under a week would do, didn't get it, and there, I imagine, you have the whole explanation. He has simply gone off without it; and there the matter might have ended but for the genius of the local reporter who couldn't let such a chance of a sensation slip."

"Mr. Poynter will owe him no thanks, if that is the case. Nor his friends either. I have just come from the Archdales. The old General is in great tribulation about it."

"After all, I dare say he isn't the first officer in the world who has been absent without leave for a day or two."

"It is unfortunate for him that he should have happened to select this particular moment," said Eustace, trying to reconcile himself to the banker's view. "It will look bad, won't it?"

"Oh, he'll get back in time for the start, never fear. The whole thing might have been overlooked if it had only been kept quiet. Now——" Meynell shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it's a pity. He was a fine young fellow. Good-bye, and thanks."

Mr. Meynell held out his hand readily, but drew it back with an exclamation of impatience as a quick little step was heard outside and, with the merest formality in the shape of a knock for admission, the door opened to admit the boyish figure of Lord Charles Brant.

"Sorry to intrude, Oliver, but I've something to say which won't keep a day longer than we can help. Good-day, Mr. Stannard. You are the very person I could have wished to find here," he began, with his usual soft rapidity of speech. "Now, have either of you seen this?" producing an evening paper from his pocket. "Ah, yes, I see you have it there. How did you get it?"

"If you mean the account of Mr. Poynter's escapade, I can assure you my attention has been concentrated on it since mid-day to-day. I have had little chance of turning to any other subject," his brother-in-law answered, with a pettish attempt at gaiety. "That paper was bestowed on me by a detective who came to make enquiries here; Heaven only knows why."

"I do, too. I sent him."

"You did!" Meynell's face grew white with sudden passion. "I—I—can't believe you capable of playing a poor, practical joke on me, Charles."

"No. That sort of thing isn't in my line," Lord Charles went on, staying his further indignant speech by a deprecatory sign with his hand. "Least of all at present or on this subject. It is a very serious business, Oliver."

"I don't see why it should be—to us."

"No, I don't imagine you do just yet, but you'll change your opinion when you hear what I have got to say. Did you ever hear that our late mother had been specially interested in this very Mr. Poynter?"

Meynell looked as if he would like to have denied it, but with Eustace's eyes upon him and the photograph still in his pocket-book he could but assent.

"I believed so myself at one time, but I find I am mistaken. I have even been down to Shorncliffe to meet him, with no result."

Lord Charles's little suspicious eyes twinkled astonished approval. "I am glad to hear you did that. I'm *uncommonly* glad to hear it. You'll see why, presently. Now you saw that young man yourself one night at Folkestone. Mabel told you about his interview with Lady Valeria——"

"A mere casual visit."

"Hardly. Mabel says from the time her mother arrived there she was always on the watch for someone, day and night."

"But we have no proof that this was Mr. Poynter. Mabel's eyes are rarely trustworthy. It may have been some chance likeness," objected Oliver.

"I admit all that, and that you have had no evidence to go upon, nor had I till Mabel returned to-day from Midlandshire. The people she was staying with there were friends of the Poynters—guardians in fact of the younger boys—and the Colonel telegraphed to them for news of him."

Eustace was beginning to wonder what all this was to lead to, and whether he might not as well depart.



Lord Charles gave him one penetrating look and went on. "I have been since at some pains to trace his movements on that day. I call your attention to them. He came up to town by the train arriving at eleven, and the first place he went to was"—holding up an impressive forefinger—"our house in Seagrave Place. Not to see either Mabel or myself, but because he thought *you* still lived there. He got your address at Queen's Gate and here. He left no name, but the description is unmistakable. Next he went to Queen's Gate. Constance was not at home. Next, he came here."

"Here!" exclaimed Meynell, confounded.

"He saw some deputy's deputy who assured him you had not come in yet, and that you were not expected before three o'clock. (He's a bright youth that, of a fine imagination.) Again he left neither card nor name."

"Why did I not hear of this sooner?"

"Because it never occurred to you to enquire, I suppose. I confess I was somewhat startled myself when facts became clear to me. Now Oliver, here we have this young fellow in close and secret communication with our mother. After her death we have him endeavouring to obtain a private interview with you. *Private*, mind you, or why should he not have written and made an appointment or given his name anywhere? We know that Lady Valeria lives and dies in fear of an unknown claimant to her father's estate. Just recall to your mind the wording of that paper on which we consulted Mr. Stannard on the 11th of last month."

"I recall it perfectly; but you must forgive me if I utterly fail to perceive the slightest connection between the two subjects," said the banker, stiffly.

"And you must forgive me if I decline to shut my eyes to the very obvious connection that exists between them; and now, Mr. Stannard, I appeal to your honour as a gentleman, can you not of your knowledge confirm my view?"

"On my honour as a gentleman I never heard Mr. Poynter's name on Lady Valeria's lips, nor any allusion to him of any kind."

Lord Charles flushed hotly with vexation. "I am bitterly disappointed, I own. I looked to you to supply the missing clue."

"What could you have done with it?" drily enquired Oliver. "Established a motive for the young man's being kidnapped and made away with on his second visit here?" His brother-in-law's disappointment seemed a source of demure gratification. "Will you kindly suggest what course you wish me to pursue for the present. I confess my inability to deal with so complicated and delicate a case; or shall we await Mr. Poynter's return to his duty?"

"I wish you would take this more seriously, Oliver. I am not a lawyer or a detective, but I am pretty sure that either would tell you that if Mr. Poynter *never* returns to his duty Meynell will be a marked name. What are you doing?" For, with an exclamation



tion of impatience, Meynell had taken up a pen and was writing rapidly.

"Expediting that desirable event," he answered, pressing the slip of paper on his blotting-pad and handing it to Lord Charles.

It was a notice of reward: "£100 to anyone who shall give information that may lead to the discovery of Mr. Edric Poynter, &c. &c."

"You are making it very hard for that poor fellow to show his face again, Charles," he said, good-humouredly.

Then Eustace took his leave of them, and returned to bear what comfort he might to poor old Sir John.

Sir John's misgivings had evidently been justified. He had not been allowed to keep his secret to himself. The open newspaper lay upon the table, as if under discussion, when Eustace re-entered the room, and Sir John stood in the window, his back to the room, his shoulders squared and obstinacy expressed in every line of them.

"I tell you, Het, it can't be done. Not by me, at least."

"But something *must* be done, and done by you, Daddy. It's your affair beyond all others'. A friend of ours—an officer in the Royal Denbigh—why, Daddy, what *will* they think of you in the regiment if you make no sign. You must go at once to the Horse Guards."

"Never, Het!" he shouted, so roughly that his daughter started back as if from a blow. "Of course I could make a disturbance if I chose, but I won't. Do you want to ruin the boy? Cut off his last chance? Ah, here's Mr. Stannard. What news?" Sir John listened with a certain dismal complacency as Eustace made his meagre little report.

"D'ye hear that, Het? Meynell's opinion. The opinion of one of the leading men in the city. Stands to reason he must know the world. Just what I was saying when you came in, Mr. Stannard, and I'm afraid we're both right. It gave me a turn at first—thinking of murder—but it's *not*. I wish to Heaven it was!" he broke off angrily.

"You think he's gone?"

"I don't think; I *know*. I've seen it all before. It wasn't for nothing that my head went running on poor Harry Sanderson all day after we met this boy, Poynter, just outside here, and I told him what I'd heard at the Horse Guards. Weren't you there, Het?"

"What did he do?" spoke a strained little voice from the window.

"Do? Why, look bothered and sick at heart, and down on his luck. Everything a soldier ought not to look. Just poor Sanderson's face when we landed at Varna and heard we were to go to the front directly. My greatest friend. As fine a fellow as ever stepped. Nothing wrong with him but nerves, or imagination, or something. Nothing that the first sight of the enemy or the first volley about his ears wouldn't have mended for good and all. Now listen,

Hetty ; two days after we landed he disappeared ; fell into the harbour ; robbed and murdered—take your choice which. There's a fine tablet to his memory in a church I know of, and his name is down on the memorial cross we put up to those who fell in the Crimea. His sweetheart mourned him faithfully to the end of her life."

The newspaper wavered, but Hetty made no sign.

"Nevertheless, four years after, I was called by the police to identify a man found drowned with my name in his tattered pocket-book. A miserable, half-starved, opium-sodden scarecrow, but Harry Sanderson, and no other. I gave a name at random, and the parish buried him. What mad panic had driven the poor wretch to fly, how he must have skulked in hiding, and drifted lower and lower, who can tell ? And to think that just such another ——"

"But you *shall not* think it ! Nobody has any right to think it !" cried Hester, standing forth, her eyes blazing, her lips a-quiver. "No one is ever likely to know two such miserable stories in a life. What has he done that we should begin to cast shame on him when he is not here to defend himself—when he must be lying dead—he *must* !"

"Why ! Why ! Het ? What does the girl mean ? What do you know more than anybody else ? Eh ? Speak up if you do."

"I don't. Why should I, any more than the Meynells ?" Her voice dropped as if she were sullen or ashamed of her outburst, and she began nervously to smooth and fold the paper, her face turned from them.

"Now what about your mother, Het ? You mustn't break out before her like that, you know. Bless my soul, no. And is she to be told ? and am *I* to do it, or you, or Mr. Stannard ?"

"There's no reason why you should not tell her ; I am sure Mr. Stannard's presence will be a comfort. There are so many last questions, which were forgotten when he was here before, about Monday's arrangements. I don't suppose you need be afraid that any other subject will agitate her much at present."

Sir John frowned in perplexity at Hetty's unusual tone ; but toddled off, rather enjoying, in the secret depths of his soul, his importance as the bearer of such awful tidings, now that his first alarm and grief had worn off.

Eustace lingered irresolutely. Something in Hester's tone and the sudden droop of her figure as her father left the room and she believed herself alone arrested him. She was not ill or fainting as he fancied however. She only dropped her arms on the back of Sir John's great chair, and her face on them, reminding him as she did so of the day when he found her alone in St. Fridolin's, and, by association, of her half-spoken confidences. Perhaps the recollection helped him to understand the meaning of her face when she raised it and met his unexpectedly.

"Do you believe that ?" she asked, under her breath.

He was taken aback : never having formed an opinion of his own. Sir John's theory seeming as plausible as Lord Charles's, he had not considered it necessary to hold any special views of his own, so far.

"I don't *want* to agree with your father," he said, heartily, "and I won't if you'll give me a single good ground to go upon."

"I don't know whether I can. I don't know how much I ought to tell—if telling would help. I haven't had time to think yet," she said, wearily. "I made him a promise and I ought to keep it—or so it appears to me just now," and she pressed her hands to her eyes again.

Edric had been so careful to omit all mention of any menace from Euphrosyne, that to Hester's mind he merely conveyed the impression of a common-place intriguer, possessed by some means of Lady Valeria's confidence, and anxious to keep the manipulation of the affair to herself. The last interview, as transmitted to Hester's imagination through Edric's halting description, was an unusual and eccentric experience—nothing more; the freak of a crazy-pated old lady who had taken a romantic fancy to Edric's bright face and broad shoulders. The loss of the letter was serious of course. It most likely contained or referred to some gift to Edric which she wished her son to confirm. Something worth stealing, and which had been stolen, awkwardly enough for Edric, but there was an end of it. Edric had begged her to keep silence on the subject. He had gone as near to exacting a promise from her as he could with any propriety. Could she disobey him now to any purpose?

"What sort of a man is Mr. Meynell?" was the unexpected outcome of her reflections. "A good man?"

"I think he is—in his way. I think he is honourable, benevolent, anxious to do right."

"Will you find out whether he and Mr. Poynter ever met after Lady Valeria's death."

"I happen to know they did not."

"Then tell him that Mr. Poynter was in great trouble about something he had to deliver to him, which was stolen from him the same night that Lady Valeria gave it to him. I have no right to say more, unless he sees in this any clue worth following up. You must please not speak of this to anyone else. Now let us go to mamma. She wants reassuring on several points—that she is clear of all responsibility about tickets, and that Mr. de Cressy, as well as you, will be at hand to support her from the first."

She led the way with a nervous little laugh, and Eustace, startled at this unlooked for confirmation of all the suppositions he had heard discussed, followed; little guessing that two ends of the tangled meshes that involved them all had that moment been laid in his clasp.

(To be continued.)

## SYRUPS OF FRUITS AND FLOWERS.

### SUMMER DRINKS.



MOST countries have their national and favourite beverage. Olympus had its nectar, and the Northern Vikings looked forward to quaffing celestial mead and ale in the Halls of Odin. The sherbet of Turkey and the famous "Sekenjebin" of Persia, in which vinegar, sugar and water are so mixed that the "sour and sweet should be as equally balanced as the blessings and miseries of life;" Cider, in the making of which Normandy, Devon and New Jersey are friendly rivals; while "Limona-  
nata," cooled with the snows of the

Apennines and Pyrenees, is called through the hot streets of Italian and Spanish cities the live-long day. France has her syrups and eau sucrée, and, alas, absinthe as well; Germany her "Maitrank," which, with its odoriferous herbs and delicious flavour, approaches as nearly to nectar as anything we can imagine. The favourite drinks of America are legion, and their very names startle one into animation; whilst England, apart from her "home brew," seems to have borrowed something from all countries.

But the most popular English ideal of Summer drinks is that they should be effervescent; and, glancing down this long list, I see few that have not "something stronger" added to them. Even the harmless ginger beer is turned into "shandygaff" by the addition of beer, and seltzer and soda waters require the assistance of an army of spirituous decoctions to make them palatable. The Frenchman, with his tumbler of sugared water, has long been a standing joke amongst us; and it is not until we win experience that we find eau sucrée, flavoured with lemon syrup, is really more refreshing than any amount of the wildly delightful effervescent waters, by whatever name they may be called. After bolting them in haste, as is usually the habit, during effervescence, we soon find thirst returning on us worse than ever, and taking possession of us "like an armed man."

If financial difficulties continue as at present, many of us must simplify our conditions, and so modify the daily habits of our lives that we may accept new ways of greater economy and simplicity. Women, especially young women, seem to have already unconsciously

accepted this and put it in practice with regard to wine and beer, for day by day I hear them, in increasing numbers, declining both. Indeed, we have only to look at the changed conditions of things in the great city of London, to see that men and youths largely take tea, coffee, or milk, in preference to beer or wine, at the mid-day luncheon.

Still here, even in this change for the better, we are likely to fall from the Scylla of spirituous beverages into the Charybdis of too much tea ; a change the doctors would think (so far as our digestions and nerves are concerned) for the worse. In these times of "afternoon tea" most people take it three times a day, and are no doubt suffering for it in many ways unwittingly. The only other afternoon beverage seems to be claret-cup, and from these two some more pains-taking hostess will sometimes stray to iced coffee. I am not now speaking of parties, but of the occasions of ordinary life ; yet in both cases it seems to me, that some fresh departure is needed, something simple, easily attained, and cheap, and not beyond the powers of the house-mistress, in town or country, to produce herself. For all these reasons a return to the delicately flavoured and palatable syrups of olden days, made of fruits and flowers, or spices, both fragrant and suitable to Summer and the sunny season, seems sensible and advisable.

The first and oldest of these syrups is "Capillaire," formerly meaning a syrup made from the leaves of the Maidenhair fern, but now used to denote a simple syrup flavoured with orange-flower water. The North American *Adiantum pedatum* has the same properties as the Maidenhair, and is often used as a substitute. The aroma is agreeable and aromatic, and the liquid is somewhat mucilaginous.

The basis of "Capillaire," and most of the syrups, is an ordinary clarified one, made of sugar without admixture. The method of making is as follows : Put into a saucepan two pounds of sugar to every pint of water, stir the liquid until the sugar be melted, remove from the fire, and add to it the white of an egg, beaten-up previously with a little water to a froth. Stir this into the sugar, and replace on the fire, and the moment it boils take up the saucepan and let it stand half an hour to clear. Then remove the scum which will settle at the top, and strain the syrup through a hair sieve, replace on the fire and let it boil for a quarter of an hour, skimming continually, when it should be finally taken from the fire and run through a jelly-bag. Bottle the mixture in pint bottles, and cork closely when cold. The ordinary "Capillaire" would be this syrup with half a pint of orange-flower water added to it.

The Maidenhair infusion consists of three ounces of freshly gathered leaves put into a pint of boiling water over the fire. Cover the saucepan, and stand it to infuse for three hours in a slow oven, where it cannot boil. Then run the mixture through a jelly-bag, prepare a gallon of syrup made as directed above, and when you have boiled and skimmed it the second time, add to it a pinch of



saffron, to give it an amber hue, and continue to boil till it adheres to the spoon, and the syrup be reduced one quarter. Then pour in the infusion of Maidenhair, and a quarter of a pint of orange-flower water or a little lemon-juice, mix and stir the whole together, boil for ten minutes more, then run through a jelly-bag into a jug with a good spout (to bottle easily), bottle in pint bottles and cork, sealing down closely.

"Syrup of Guimauve," or "Marshmallow," is a very popular French syrup. A good handful of it should be put, when freshly gathered, into a quart of water. Boil it slowly in a covered vessel, till reduced to half, add this to the clarified and prepared syrup, as directed in the "Capillaire" recipe, add the orange-flower water and a little orange peel, and run through a jelly-bag.

"Syrup of Violets" is made with freshly and carefully gathered flowers, in the proportion of six pints of boiling water to a pound of flowers. Keep this closely covered, and let it remain in a warm oven to macerate for forty-eight hours. Then strain off the liquor, and press the flowers, and to each pint add a pound and a half of sugar. Put it over a very slow fire to dissolve, and let it remain, skimming it at intervals, and not allowing it to boil, and run through a jelly-bag before it be cold.

"Syrup of Clove Gillyflowers" is made in the same manner, but the flowers only require twenty-four hours' maceration.

"Syrup of Roses" is made by putting the rose leaves, freshly gathered, into a jar, packed tightly as possible; cover with boiling water, and let them macerate twenty-four hours; strain, and proceed as with the "Violet Syrup." Cowslips and Primroses can be used in the same manner.

"Groseille Syrup" is made with the juice of Red Currants, which must be gathered when quite ripe. The juice is obtained by placing the fruit in a jar, which must be stood upright in a pan of boiling water, over the fire, when all expressed, strain through a sieve, then squeeze the juice through a cotton bag, and to every pint put two pounds and a quarter of sugar. When melted, take the pan from the fire, and beat up the white of an egg, and clarify as directed in the recipe for "Capillaire." Skim carefully, strain through a jelly bag, and bottle closely when cold. All Fruit Syrups may be made in this manner.

"Spice Syrups" may be manufactured at any time of the year, and are easy to make. "Clove Syrup" is made by pouring boiling water over powdered cloves, one pint to two ounces. Place it over the fire, and let it boil an hour, then strain through a sieve, and to every pint of liquor add a pound and a half of sugar. Clarify with white of egg, then boil till thick enough, and run through a jelly-bag. "Cinnamon" and "Nutmeg" Syrups are made in the same manner. From their warming qualities, they are preferred in the Summer by many people, who would be afraid of Fruit Syrups. "Ginger



Syrup" is made with an ounce and a half of root-ginger to a quart of boiling water. Pound the ginger in a mortar, and leave it to macerate, closely covered, for two days. Then strain, and add a pound and a half of sugar to each pint, and proceed to clarify as above directed.

What is called "Syrup of Orgeat" in France is really "Syrup of Almonds;" the name "Orgeat" being derived from a former custom to make barley-water and flavour it with almonds. There is no more delicious thing than good "Orgeat," and there are two ways of making it. One (which appears to be English) with milk and one without. The first is perhaps the most simple in manufacture: viz. Take three quarters of a pound of sweet almonds, and twenty-five bitter ones, blanch them and pound together in a mortar, adding a tablespoonful of cold water at intervals to prevent the almonds oiling. Mix two pints of water and three of milk in a jug, and add it gradually to the pounded almonds, stirring very well. Then strain through some muslin. Take half a pound of powdered sugar and a pint of water, and boil for half an hour, skimming it well, mix it with the almonds, and lastly add half a cupful of orange-flower water.

The method of making French "Orgeat" is more complex. Blanch a pound of sweet and two ounces of bitter almonds, and pound them as directed above, in a mortar, and mix the paste gradually with three pints of water, and strain through a cotton bag, mixing with it a quarter of a pint of orange-flower water. Make a gallon of clarified syrup, as directed at the beginning, and put it on the fire. Let it boil up, then add the almond emulsion very gradually, and boil carefully till it attains a proper thickness. Let it cool, then, and bottle while still warm, shaking before you pour it into the bottles, and letting it stand till perfectly cool before you cork it. The bottles should be quite full, and in France a drop of olive oil is poured on the top of each bottle to ensure the emulsions keeping. This can be removed with a little cotton.

A friend in America has recently contributed the following to our stock of Summer drinks, and says it is much used amongst the "abstaining" portion of the population. In fact it is called "the Temperance beverage." Take six lemons, a pint of ripe strawberries, a small pineapple, a pound of castor sugar, and two quarts of water. Begin by peeling the lemons very thinly, and then cut them in two, and squeeze out the juice, taking out the seeds over the peel. This should stand for at least twenty-four hours. Then add to it half-a-pound of the sugar, put the other half-pound over the strawberries, and mash them with a spoon. The pineapple should be peeled and cut into slices. Take a large bowl, and put in first the lemon-juice, peel, and sugar, then the strawberries and the slices of pineapple, and lastly add the water, which, if not very cold, should be iced. Stir with a silver spoon till the sugar has melted, and let it stand for two hours before serving.

And now, remembering the invariable thirstiness of children, who, I believe, really suffer much when they have thoughtless elders, I will give a cheap and very easily prepared recipe for "Imperial," an old-fashioned, but excellent drink, and suitable for everyone, of course, as well as children.

Put a quarter of an ounce of cream-of-tartar and the juice and thinly-cut peel of one lemon into a large jug, pour on them a quart of *boiling* water, and sweeten to your taste with white sugar. Cover it up, and when cold it will be fit for use. The lemon peel and cream-of-tartar will fall to the bottom as sediment, and need not be disturbed in pouring out.

This last recipe will be found a veritable acquisition where tennis playing and constant violent exercises are going on amongst the young people of the family.

But I must not conclude before giving one or two for the different "Cups" so much in use in these days, and which many people would prefer to anything else. It will be best, perhaps, to divide them into the inexpensive, and the *recherché*, and to give one of each. As a general rule, all Cups should be put in a jug and covered up, which jug should be surrounded with rough ice for at least an hour before using. Then the contents should be strained, or carefully poured off, free from the herbs, &c., that have been used in making it. Francatelli recommends that bruised sugar-candy should be used for all such drinks instead of sugar. In ordinary cases a cheap claret is quite good enough for "Claret-cup" at home; and the Swiss champagne makes a good ordinary "Champagne-cup."

It is hardly needful to say, perhaps, that the champagne of violent effervescence is not the best wine. "Sillery," which only froths and bubbles, is the best of the champagnes; and in France "*bien frappé*" simply means that the champagne has been iced out of all effervescence. This is not the English taste; we do not like "still effects" in sparkling wines; and, strange to say, we seem to have had the same taste a good many years ago, for Henry VIII. as well as Charles V. of Spain, and Pope Leo X. had each a vineyard at Ay, or Aii, where the best of the effervescing wine is made; and each vineyard had a small house and a superintendent to manage the vintage. So each sovereign in those days looked after the genuine article and quite appreciated it. There is something very funny, when one thinks of the characters of these three men, in the fact that they all had a taste for champagne. I hope it is not wrong to talk scandal of King Wenceslaus of Bohemia and of the Romans, at this late date, but it is said of him that in 1397, when he came to France to negotiate a treaty with Charles VI., he got as far as Rheims, and having made acquaintance with champagne for the first time, he was overcome by the wine every day before dinner for a year and a half, and managed to spin out his diplomatic business for that time, by first yielding nothing, and then yielding everything

required of him. I have always hoped that this was not the Wenceslaus of the Christmas carol, in what the French would call his "jeunesse orangeuse."

A simple method of making a "cup" of any of the sparkling wines, champagne, moselle, or hock, is to take for the component parts one bottle of wine, one of soda water, a *liqueur* glass of curaçoa, and one basket of fresh strawberries, and sugar to taste. Any other fruit may be used according to the season, such as raspberries, pineapple, pears or peaches (I should use brandy instead, or as well as curaçoa).

A more recherché cup would be one bottle of champagne, three glasses of sherry, one of brandy, one of curaçoa, half a lemon, two slices of cucumber, the same of pineapple, a bottle of seltzer water, a sprig of borage, and sugar to taste. With moselle, sauterne, or chablis, an orange should be used instead of a lemon, and with Sauterne many people prefer a bottle of Vichy water (Celestin's) to seltzer or soda.

The best "Claret-cup" would have one bottle of champagne to two bottles of the best claret, three glasses of sherry, one of brandy, and the same of noyau, two slices of cucumber, and some borage. In using the latter, it is well to remember that, although you cannot do without it, you may have too much of it.

"Cider" and "Perry-cups" are prepared in the same manner: viz., one quart of cider or perry, one pint of seltzer or soda, two glasses of brandy, one of curaçoa, half a lemon, a little grated nutmeg, and a sprig of borage. This may be simplified by leaving out the curaçoa, and reducing the brandy.

"Pineapple-cup" must be made with the best champagne in the above proportions, but, instead of curaçoa, maraschino must be used. Slice the pineapple very thin—first ice the wine—then put the pineapple, maraschino, and sugar into a glass jug, and pour the iced wine and soda water on them, and serve at once. Do not let the pineapple stand in the champagne when icing it.

In giving the various recipes for syrups, I have invariably used the French formula, but, of course, any other flavouring such as lemon, vanilla, or almond, may be used instead of orange-flower water. For fear my readers should forget that "macerate" has two meanings, perhaps I had better say that in this case "macerate" means to "steep the flowers or spices in water kept on a stove or in a cool oven, so that it may be constantly warm." No other word quite explains the process.

And now for two parting pieces of advice. Always stir everything in the way of syrups or beverages with a silver spoon: and let nothing disturb your equanimity. Be patient as the legendary "Griselda," so shall you be fortunate in concocting your "Summer Drinks."

DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

## STORIES FROM A MUSIC-SCHOOL.

MARY SILVER.

THE music-school from which these stories come is situated in Tennion Street, Guelph Square, at the West End of London. Guelph Square, altogether a very quiet place, is tolerably well-known to the frequenters of the West End; but not many strangers find their way into Tennion Street, where is the shabby and dingy old house dignified by the name of "The Royal English School of Music." Its vicinity, however, may be guessed at by the number of students, male and female, who pass to and fro with their music-cases about the neighbourhood.

If a stranger were accidentally to wander into this little-known region, and rendering himself invisible to the porter who sits in the hall, were to pass unchallenged up the stair-case, he would feel inclined to say with Caliban—

"A thousand twangling instruments  
Do hum about mine ears."

There is a perfect Babel of sounds going on from all the class-rooms around. Violinists practising florid passages; brilliant bursts of pianoforte music; voices, high and low, male and female, performing shakes, and scales, and runs; are all blended in a musical chaos more realistic than that of Haydn or Gounod, until, perhaps, the great voice of the organ in the concert-room comes rumbling through the house, to swallow up all the other sounds.

On a certain windy morning in March, a group of candidates were waiting to go through their entrance-examination within those classic walls, which are adorned with black boards inscribed with the names of students who have won scholarships, and with the busts of certain departed principals—one or two of them being decorated with burnt-cork moustaches by some irreverent student. Amidst this group sat a rather tall, fair young man, with very regular features, and a small fair moustache shading his upper lip. He carried in his hand a volume of Bach's organ fugues.

It was early in the morning, and the examiners had not yet arrived. The candidates generally looked about as cheerful as candidates at examinations are wont to look; and the tall, fair young man fidgeted, and muttered impatient exclamations, in a manner which seemed to indicate that he was not used to waiting and did not admire the experience.

Presently, a girl came by, music in hand, and went into the concert-room, giving a quick, smiling glance, as she passed the impatient

candidate, first at his face, and then at his music. The young man looked after her with awakened interest.

"A nice girl," he remarked to himself. "She looked at Bach as if she knew him too. I wonder if she is going to play?"

In a very few moments the organ-tones came pealing upon the air—the grave chorale, succeeded by delicate variations, which opens Mendelssohn's sixth sonata. The fair young man, after listening for a little, jumped up and walked into the concert-room.

Yes, there was the girl at the organ; it was she who was playing. As the concert-room was otherwise empty, the candidate for examination thought he might improve his time by making the acquaintance of this Saint Cecilia, so he boldly made his way to the organ just as the young lady came to the end of a variation.

"I beg your pardon! I hope I have not startled you; but will you tell me if this is the organ I shall have to play upon when I am examined?"

The young lady turned round with a mischievous smile. She was *not* startled, having watched his approach in the mirror which hung over the music-rest.

"I imagine it is," she replied, "as this is the only organ in the house. Would you like to have a look at it?"

"Thank you. But am I disturbing you?"

"Not at all. I was only playing while I wait for Dr. Cecil; I am the first on his list, and am rather early this morning."

"Dr. Cecil? He is the Professor I want to have. What sort of an old fellow is he?"

"He is the dearest, most gentle, most amiable little man in existence, and an excellent master. All his pupils love him, though they laugh at his round bald head and call him 'the Dutch Cheese.'"

"All his pupils love him!" echoed the young man, reflectively. "That's very jolly for the Doctor. Does he teach many ladies?"

"No, I'm the only girl in his class at present. There will be some more of his pupils coming in a minute, so you had better try the organ at once if you wish to do so. What are you going to play?" she continued, rising from the organ-stool.

"Bach's G. minor; the big one, you know. What wretched pedals these are!"

However, the candidate for examination contrived to give a very brilliant rendering of the fugue in spite of the "wretched pedals;" and his new acquaintance congratulated him warmly upon it.

"Well, you *can* play!" she said. "That was splendid! They are safe to pass *you*."

"Oh, I dare say they won't throw me out," replied the young man, carelessly. "But I wish they would be quick about this business; I object to be kept waiting."

He had taken a good look at his companion during their conversation, and had decided that she was not pretty, but that there was



something attractive about her. She had a bright, expressive face, framed in a mass of crisp, bronze-brown, wavy hair, irregular features, a pair of changeful hazel-grey eyes, and a sensitive mouth. And she had that "excellent thing in woman," a pleasant voice. She wore a blue serge frock, and had a bunch of violets tucked in her bodice.

"I believe that is the principal now arriving. You had better go, Mr. Templeton."

"Why, how did you know my name?" said he, surprised.

"I saw it on your music."

"Now, that is a capital idea! May I see your music, please?"

"I will tell you without that. My name is Mary Silver."

"And so you are a pupil of Dr. Cecil's. I thought at first sight that you were a singer, until I saw how you looked at my Bach."

"What a very vocal-looking face I must have," laughed Miss Silver.

"I am often taken for a singer. Now I knew, when I saw the way you moved your hands, that you were an instrumentalist. Oh, yes, I have had experience. I am deputy organist at our parish church; I used to play at the daily services when I was rather youthful, so the choir styled me 'the infant phenomenon,' without regard to my vexation."

"I am organist at St. Cuthbert's, — Square," remarked the young man. "But my organ is not a good one."

"No? *We* have the finest organ in Surrey. Mr. Norfolk would talk to you for an hour together about it. But I really think you ought to go now. And don't offend the Dragon."

"Who is the Dragon?"

"Don't you know? He is director of the sight-singing classes, and secretary to the principal, and is with him at all the examinations. He arranges all the class-lists, fixes your hours for you, reports you to the principal if you don't behave, and altogether transacts the major part of the school business. He is chief after the principal. They call him the Dragon because he is so sharp and wide-awake, and very strict; but he is the kindest and best of friends, if you know how to get on with him."

"He seems a favourite of yours."

"He is; a very great favourite; he is always so good to me. They say here that he never forgets a kindness or forgives an injury. I don't believe the last, but I know the first to be true."

"Well, I'll behave as well as I can. Au revoir, Miss Silver."

"What a splendid player that young man is!" she thought to herself, as the door closed behind him. "And how very blue his eyes are."

But Dr. Cecil arriving at this moment, and two or three of his pupils with him, Mary soon had to occupy her attention otherwise than with the blueness of Mr. Frank Templeton's eyes.

She did not see him again that day, although she stayed a little longer than usual after her lesson, and lingered somewhat on the



stairs and in the doorway as she went out. But on the following Tuesday, as she went into her singing-master's little room, a student named Nelly Warner, a terrible chatterbox of a girl, ran up to her.

"Mary, there's such a good-looking fellow just come in! He's one of the new students. Such a complexion, and such perfect features! I am over head and ears in love with him already."

"You goose!" exclaimed Clara Latimer, another of the class, for there were always several pupils present at the lessons: "he is an organist, Mary, and is to be a pupil of Dr. Cecil's, so you will see a good deal of him."

"Oh," said Mary, "that must be my friend with the blue eyes. I made his acquaintance on Saturday."

"There now!" cried Nelly, dolefully, "you are a mean thing, Mary. I did think I was going to have him all to myself!"

There was a general burst at this. Nelly Warner was famous for making them laugh.

"What's that?" enquired their professor, turning round from the lesson he was giving. "What are you all at? Let me have the recit again, Miss Smith, and sing that F. sharp this time."

"It's only that Miss Silver has a new sweetheart, Mr. St. Paul," said mischievous Nelly Warner.

"Oh, is that it? But who was the old one?" added Mr. St. Paul, a pleasant, easy-going, genial kind of man, who took a fatherly interest in his pupils.

"It is not true, Mr. St. Paul," cried Mary, crimsoning. "I haven't one at all."

"Well, never mind! I dare say you will get one, all in good time," replied her master, consolingly.

"I never mean to fall in love," returned Mary. "I like my liberty too well."

"We shall see," responded the professor, sagely. "Miss Latimer, you are the next; get your solfeggio ready. And if you want a lesson in expression, young ladies, go and hear Madame Albani sing 'Hear my prayer,' to-morrow night."

"Mary," said Clara Latimer, as the two girls sat in the concert-room a little later, "your handsome young man passed his exam. all right, then?" These two girls were close friends, and Clara had been told about the Saturday adventure.

"I knew he would pass, he played so well," replied Mary. "You should have heard him rattle off that fugue! I do hope he will come this afternoon. I want you to see how good-looking he is."

"Have you taken the school fever?" laughed Clara. "Is it a case of 'love at first sight?'"

"No," answered Mary, seriously. "But he *has* a wonderfully nice face."

"What was that about 'first sight?'" interrupted a masculine voice from behind. "Is Mary Silver stricken with the fever?"

This was Lancelot Bell, a devoted friend and admirer of the girls. Society in the school, like society out of it, was split up into numerous little cliques. Every group of girls had their special cavaliers to sit with them in the concert-room, sometimes escort them to their own doors, if they lived near, or else to the railway station, and take care of them on concert nights. Lance Bell was one of Mary's "set;" he was a pianist of the "thunder and lightning" order; a little, fair, lively, romantic fellow, thoroughly good and kind, and who went by the nickname of "Dresden China."

"I heard you raving about somebody's face," said Lance, as he sat down behind them. "Whose was it?"

"A new student's, with whom Mary Silver is smitten," replied Clara. "Was it the face or the organ-playing that conquered you, Mary?"

"You need not laugh," responded Mary, with dignity. "Only think," she added, her tone becoming serious, "if it be true that all the words we speak remain in the air, what a fearful collection of nonsense would be found floating over this concert-room!"

"Yes, and Mr. Lancelot Bell would be found responsible for quite half of them," spoke up Emilie Latimer, Clara's sister. "Who is this?"

"Oh, it is he," exclaimed Mary. "Look, Clara, here he comes. Tell me if you don't think him handsome."

Clara Latimer looked critically at the new student, who had just entered the concert-room.

"Yes," she whispered back, "he *is* handsome; but, do you know, I think his face very cold. Mary, he seems to be coming straight up to *you*!"

And in fact Mr. Templeton did come "straight up" to Mary, and took his seat behind her with as much *sang-froid* as if it had been his customary place for years. She greeted him with a heightened colour and a frank smile. He then turned to the other young man and spoke.

"How are you, Bell?"

"Why, Templeton! What wind has blown you here?" cried Lancelot, in great surprise, as they shook hands. "You never told me you had any idea of coming."

"I made my mind up rather suddenly," was the indifferent answer. "What's on now?"

"That girl walking up the room is going to play," explained one of the young ladies.

"I'll wager she is going to play Weber," said Lance Bell. "We have the Concert-stick about every other week at these rehearsals."

"Wrong for once, Lance!" said Mary, as the first notes sounded. "It's Sterndale-Bennett. What a welcome change!"

"Just hark how she is banging out the first notes of all those groups!" cried Clara Latimer. "But what can you expect when a girl with a touch like a sledge-hammer attempts to play Bennett!"

The school students were hard and captious critics in matters musical, but otherwise they were a merry and friendly set. There was that kind of free-masonry attaching to them which seems always to exist between the followers of any art; and in spite of the wide differences among them in social position, religious opinion, and politics, they never quarrelled.

"There seems to be a considerable amount of conversation going on," remarked Frank Templeton. "Doesn't the conductor object to that?"

"He does sometimes," observed Mary. "We are as considerate as possible, and choose the back row to sit in when we want to talk."

"Then you don't listen?"

"Oh, don't we!" retorted Miss Clara Latimer. "I could tell you exactly how many notes that girl dropped in her last run. It was only *five*."

"And as to doing fancy-work," said Emilie Latimer, "the girls do it everywhere. That girl in front takes her lace-work into choir."

"And nine times out of ten she misses her leads in consequence," said Clara.

"What is the choir here like?" enquired Mr. Templeton.

"It is very good," said Mary; "the female voices are rather a specialty. They want more men. Shall you join?"

"Perhaps. I don't know."

"Don't you know, Templeton?" put in Lance Bell, mischievously, "Mary Silver sits in the top row of the sopranos. It is convenient for flirting with the front row of the tenors."

"Lancelot, be quiet!" cried Mary, colouring.

"It is a curious fact," remarked Charlie Powell, another of the students, "that the pretty girls on both sides always seem to gravitate towards that top row."

"You don't mean to say that the students *flirt*?" cried Mr. Templeton, with an expression of great wonder.

"Why, certainly," asserted Clara Latimer, all innocence. "It is part of the school course."

"How very jolly!" murmured the new student. "But they must have forgotten to put it down on my class-list."

Mary Silver began to see a good deal of Mr. Templeton. It happened that the time fixed for his organ-lesson was next to that of her own. Also, he *did* come into the choir, and sat just behind her, next to the organ; and he always came to rehearsals. Thus their friendship grew and ripened rapidly. Indeed, the atmosphere of the English School of Music was as a hothouse to plants of this growth.

Mary Silver lived with her grandmother, her only surviving relative, in a certain suburban town in Surrey. Their dwelling was a pretty, old-fashioned vine-covered cottage, on the sunny side of Church Street, the oldest part of the town. Mary's own little room looked on to the street, full of quaint houses and shops, the grey old

church-tower, with its sweet-voiced bells, "the pride of Surrey," rising up behind. It was just such a little chamber as Goethe's Gretchen may have slept and dreamed in before Faust came with lingering looks and tender tones to steal her heart away. The sunlight shone through the diamond-pane window in the earliest morning, and the late moon peeped in at night, and cast mysterious rays on the crucifix which hung over the little bed. Beethoven's noble head, Mendelssohn's genial smile, Bach's grave but not unkindly features adorned the walls. Mary used to say "good-night" and "good-morning" to them as though they had been alive.

Mary had taken to the organ at a very early age. The fine old parish church of St. John the Baptist contained a noble instrument; there was daily service, and the music was well looked after. Mary had been the organist's favourite pupil before she was transferred for study to the English School and Dr. Cecil. She still went to the church to practise, and to take share in the daily organ services.

She and Frank Templeton soon became fast friends. He helped her with her harmony and counterpoint, "turned over" for her when she played at a chamber concert, and was her frequent companion in all the school doings: sometimes escorting her and the Latimer girls to concerts, operas, and recitals.

Mary had introduced him to Mrs. Silver, telling her he was very kind to her in the school, and the old lady received him cordially. During the Easter holidays he was a frequent guest at Vine Cottage. He and Mary had long afternoons together in the quaint, low-pitched drawing-room, playing duets, and singing; or they would be together at the organ in the vast old church, nearly large enough for a cathedral, with its lofty pillars and painted windows and ancient monuments, and its stately altar. And then there would be merry meals afterwards in the little parlour—they kept to the old-fashioned word—when the kindly hostess would bring out wonderful treasures of home-made cakes and preserves to her appreciative guest. Mrs. Silver was a very pretty old lady, with an abundance of snow-white hair, and she was genial and lively as a girl. She had taken a great fancy to Frank, and made him very welcome.

Some woods lay just outside the town, and Frank and Mary had frequent rambles in them, returning laden with spoils of the sweet Spring flowers to fill the little house. And they had pleasant hours in the long, narrow garden, Mary's favourite dreaming-place, amongst the blossoming fruit trees. Oh, happy Spring days, that passed all too quickly!

But these two young people did not consider themselves in love with one another; they were "only friends." And if the sharp-witted students at the school noticed that Mary had a way of constantly watching the concert-room door until Frank appeared, and that Frank had a special smile which he kept for Mary alone, such things were too general there to call for more than a passing remark that

"Templeton and Miss Silver seemed rather sweet upon one another."

Her grandmother did indeed say to her once: "What makes your eyes so bright lately, child? and you go about smiling, smiling to yourself, all the day long!"

"It's the summer coming, grandmamma," answered Mary. Yes, the summer was coming to her.

The next term brought with it the formidable prospect of the July examinations; time of woe and tribulation to both students and professors. For in spite of their flirtations the students, with very few exceptions, worked extremely hard, and the yearly examinations were severe and searching. But,

"Be the day weary or be the day long,  
At length it ringeth to evensong."

And so, in course of time, even this terrible period was got through.

Then came prize day, always an exciting time. It was not known who had obtained the bronze and silver medals, which were so eagerly competed for, until the moment of bestowal, when the names were called out in stentorian tones by Mr. Ellis.

The students and their friends assembled for the ceremony in the concert-room; the girls wearing the school uniform of white, with a royal-red sash worn over the right shoulder, and the former medalists displaying all their decorations. The medals were almost always given by some notable celebrity of the musical world; and the successful students who were named, and had to "go down to the front," to receive them, were much or little cheered by their fellows, according to their popularity in the school, or the reverse. Then would follow speeches from the principal, and from other grantees in and out of the institution; and the proceedings would terminate with enthusiastic cheering, and demonstrative farewells all round; the students then separating, generally in a very effervescent state, to spend the long vacation.

Some of the girls with their friends celebrated the close of the term by an excursion to Hampton Court the next day. Mary Silver was one of them. A right merry day they spent, wandering about proud Wolsey's ancient palace; that haunted region, thick with the ghosts of so many whose names are famous in history. They explored the palace and the grounds; they took boat and rowed up the river, singing as they went; they had their likenesses taken by an itinerant photographer on the green, in what that artist designated "a grope;" and they went to "Jaggs's Dining Rooms," where they consumed tea and bread-and-butter, and unlimited quantities of cake and strawberries. Such days as these live in the memory.

The long vacation lasted nearly two months; and during this time Frank Templeton went to Cornwall for a prolonged visit. Mary Silver was staying at Hastings with Mrs. Latimer and her daughters. It thus happened that the two "friends" did not meet again until

the day before the commencement of the Michaelmas term. Mary was seated at the organ, practising in St. John's Church, in the golden autumn afternoon, when Frank walked in.

"Oh, Frank!—is that you?" she cried, coming to a sudden stop in "The Horse and his Rider."

"It's myself, if I am not mistaken," answered he. "How are you, Mary?"

"I was wondering," said Mary, when their first greetings were over, "why I had not heard anything of you all this time. I understood you were to come back long before the term began—and I wanted to have a blackberrying day."

"Oh, I put off coming back—at least, I stayed longer than I intended, and then—and there were a lot of things to look after," replied Frank, rather vaguely, and with a sudden access of colour to his usually pale cheeks. Now Frank was not at all given to blushing; in fact, he could generally hold perfect control of his countenance, and Mary wondered. She saw there was something constrained in his manner.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked, looking up at him anxiously.

"My dear child, I am all right!" he returned, rather impatiently. "What should be the matter?"

And then he began to talk to her in the old manner, and to give comical descriptions of his adventures in Cornwall, so that her misgivings passed away.

They went home together, and had tea in the garden with Mrs. Silver; the dear old lady bringing out her choicest stores and fruit to regale the returned truant. Mary was looking very pretty in her pink cotton frock, with that bunch of fragrant carnations at her bosom, and the dreamy light in her eyes. Frank thought so; and he wondered why he had never thought her so very pretty until now. They had a merry meal under the large tree on the grass-plot, and chatted and laughed away until the sound of the church bell came stealing out upon the air.

"There is the bell for evensong!" cried Mary, hastily rising. "I must go. Where's my music?"

He did not offer to carry her music, or to go with her. He remained at home, talking to Mrs. Silver. Mary felt—well, as she had never felt before.

After playing through the service she came back and found him indoors at the piano. They fell to discussing the coming term, and how hard they both meant to work, and the amount of composition they would do. Most of the school students dabbled in composition, some made it their principal study.

Presently they strolled into the garden. It had grown dusk, and the great golden harvest-moon had risen, and was looking down tenderly upon them. In the west, the sunset glories of crimson and purple and palest opal light had not yet quite faded; but over their



heads the sky was darkest blue, where the evening star was shining. The ripe fruit hung now on the trees that had been thick with blossom at Eastertide; and the silvery asters were in bloom around; and the sunflowers, with their broad, smiling faces turning ever to the sun, the timid star of Bethlehem, which opens its petals only in the twilight, and the late tea-roses, heavy with fragrance. They paused in their walk to look at a pale snap-dragon on the wall, its outline sharply defined against the western sky. Frank had slipped his hand through Mary's arm; she had been talking to him on a subject on which she was wont to wax eloquent—her love for the church and the organ.

"It is part of my life," she said. "I love that organ as though it were a living thing. No other organ could be quite the same to me. I feel that it knows me, and would miss me if I were away from it; and I should not like to say anything against it, lest it should feel hurt."

"Silly little girl!" said Frank, very softly. "You are too tender-hearted, Mary; people who feel so much always suffer. It is not wise to let our feelings run away with us."

By way of practical illustration of this, Frank moved his arm, and let it creep round the girl's waist. The words themselves were not very caressing, but was it the subtle influence of the night that made his voice sound so dangerously tender? Mary said not a word: she stood beside him with downcast eyes. And then he bent his head nearer, till she could feel his breath upon her cheek, and their lips touched.

"My darling! My little wife!" Frank whispered.

And in the silence which ensued, for neither of them spoke, old Mrs. Silver appeared at the open window, calling to them that it was late to be out, for the dew was rising.

Mary lingered long at her prayers that night; she wanted to thank God, yet hardly knew whether it would be right, for this strange new happiness which filled her heart to overflowing; and she went to sleep with a smile upon her lips. But the moonlight crept into the room through the bars of the diamond window panes, and threw upon the bed a shadow as of a cross.

Again in the morning she had to go to St. John's, to take the organ. How happy she felt as she went along with her music, her heart within her singing songs of joyfulness. For surely, she thought, that kiss last night could mean nothing but that Frank loved her, and would want her to be his wife one day. Nay, had he not called her so—"my little wife!" Despite the innocent flirtations at the Music School, Mary Silver was simple-minded as the day; and it never occurred to her that anyone could have spoken to her as Frank spoke, and kissed her on the lips as he had kissed without a serious meaning. The chatter and nonsense of the students in their open flirtations was one thing; this implied quite another.

Yes, he must love her. She knew it by a thousand little tokens; tender shades of manner, caressing tones of voice, smiles such as he never gave elsewhere. "Trifles, light as air," all of them, but quickly read and interpreted by wits that are sharpened by love. Mary was right, the evidences of love are more often found in these intangible things than in spoken words. Frank did love her. Thus, throughout the service, and as she left the church and walked home after it, her whole heart seemed glowing with a sweet, radiant light. And as she went on later to the School for the first day of opening term, she said to herself: "I shall see him, I shall see him."

These joyful anticipations received a check; it is often the case in life. *She* reached the School; but there was no Frank; he did not make his appearance at rehearsal. So it was rather a blank day to Mary Silver. And the first day of the term had been wont to be so pleasant a one. New friends to make, old ones to greet again after a long absence, tales of vacation adventures to hear and relate on all sides.

But on the morrow she saw Mr. Templeton at their organ-lesson. He was silent and grave; nor did she wonder at it when he told her that the reason of his absence yesterday was the sudden death of a relative. They talked together in a subdued manner; but he did not allude in any way, even by tone or look, to that which had passed between them. His recent painful news debarred it for the moment, Mary supposed. She sympathised with him, and he seemed grateful for her sympathy; but she could not help thinking, with a sigh, of how different a meeting this was to-day from the one she had looked forward to yesterday.

The days went on. Still Frank did not, by a single word, revert to that moonlight night in the garden. They were together as much as usual at the School; and his manner to her seemed to outsiders the same as ever; but Mary herself, with the keen intuition born of love, knew that he was changed. He was irritable and impatient sometimes; but that she was too sweet-tempered to mind; she only tried, with gentle, loving wiles, to bring him back to a more gracious mood. In his manner there appeared a certain shade of constraint, at times approaching coldness, which had never been seen in him before, and that sorely grieved and perplexed her. Had she offended him? She could not think so; but why had he suddenly changed from the tender lover who had kissed her beneath the September moon and called her in the sweetest of whispers "his little wife?" Why had he done that, if this shadow was to spring up between them close upon it?

Now and then Frank would seem to repent, when he would return to the old tender looks and tones of more than friendship; yet almost before there was time to notice it his mood would change again.

It was on the Tuesday after the half-term examination that Mary, going into the room of her pianoforte master, Mr. Wilfred Shelley,

found the master absent, and the pianoforte occupied by a girl whom she had not seen before. A tall, handsome, stylish girl, with an exquisite complexion, brilliant cold eyes, and a supercilious mouth. She was playing bravura passages with a great deal of dash, and she suspended her occupation to honour Mary with a comprehensive stare.

"One of Mr. Shelley's pupils?" she coldly questioned. "He is called away to speak to somebody. You had better sit down."

"Thank you!" replied Mary, rather nettled at the supercilious tone, and at being thus patronised by a new student. "I don't require an invitation to sit. I am quite at home here. I am in my fifth year!"

The young lady laughed slightly, and ran up a chromatic scale with her left hand.

"I have seen your Mr. Shelley," she began again, "and I do not know whether I shall get on with him. He was rather inclined to be on stilts just now. A young professor, too! Fancy that! I hear also that he is sarcastic."

"He is a first rate master!" cried Mary, warmly, for Mr. Shelley was her favourite professor, and she was nothing if not loyal. "If he is ever sarcastic to his pupils, it is their own fault."

"He can be exceedingly disagreeable when he chooses," said the new comer. "There is one thing I like about him: he has a nice voice. It is pleasant and refined. I suppose he is never disagreeable to *you*?"—with slight sarcasm.

"He is never anything but kind and pleasant to me," replied Mary. "He never gave me an unkind word or a cross look."

"Ah," said the new girl, after a long, scrutinising look at Mary, "I think I know you now. I recognise you from the description which has been given to me. 'A tell-tale face; you can almost read her thoughts on it.' That's how it ran."

Mary started, and flushed crimson. "Who said that?" she asked. But even as she spoke she divined what the answer would be.

"Your friend, Mr. Frank Templeton, gave it to me."

There ensued a moment's pause. On the new-comer's face sat a proud, meaning, mocking smile. Mary shivered involuntarily, and the other girl saw it.

"I suppose Mr. Templeton never told you he had met with me?" went on she. "He is a very great friend of yours, is he not?"

"Yes," answered Mary, resolutely, looking straight at her.

"So he is of mine. We saw a good deal of him in Cornwall; my family were staying there, and we all came back together. Mr. Templeton put off his own return to suit our convenience. And he comes to us frequently now in London."

Mary heard this piece of news with an apprehensive, sinking heart. Before she had framed any answering remark, Mr. Shelley came back to conclude his new pupil's lesson. Afterwards Mary took hers.

She played badly to-day: the presence of this brilliant, scornful stranger, who was listening to her with a contemptuous curl of the lip, disturbed her equanimity.

"Mr. Shelley," Mary said to her master, when she had left them alone, "please tell me who that girl is."

"She is Miss Grey," he replied. "Miss Rosamund Grey, a new student. I know nothing more of her. You do not like her, do you?"

"I never saw anyone I disliked so much!" broke out Mary. "She seems to me like a snake woman!"

"Come, come!" he cried, laughing kindly, "you must not be so vehement against a stranger. I don't know that I much like her myself, but I do not call her names."

"I cannot play before her; her eyes quite unnerve me. She dislikes me furiously; I can detect that."

"I will have her time for lesson changed, so that you shall not meet," said Mr. Shelley, kindly.

But Mary had to meet Miss Grey at sight-singing and rehearsals. That persevering young woman seemed to have set up a perverse pleasure in Mary Silver's companionship. She was for ever seeking it, and only, Mary thought, that she might sting her with covert taunts and bitter words.

During rehearsals she would put herself at Mary's side. Mr. Templeton generally joined them, when Miss Grey would monopolise his attention: not a word, scarcely, could he give to Mary.

"How was it, Frank, that on your return from Cornwall, you never told me you had made Miss Grey's acquaintance?" Mary had asked, when she once found an opportunity.

"Oh, it—it did not occur to me, I suppose," he carelessly answered.

"I wish, said Mary, taking courage to say what was in her heart, though her voice trembled, "I wish, Frank, you had never met her."

"Why do you wish that?"

"I do not think it will be well for you. I do not think she will be a good companion for you."

"Why not? What do you know against her?"

"I don't know anything. I *feel* it."

"Nonsense, Mary, you are prejudiced," he answered, laughing lightly. "Girls never do like one another."

Rosamund Grey might not be a girl likely to do people much good, as Mary put it, but she was a brilliant girl, and beautiful; and she appeared to have set her fancy upon Mr. Frank Templeton. So, little by little, Mary saw her lover becoming estranged from her, and she could only sit by silently, and look at him with wistful eyes.

The little rift within the lute went on widening. Frank never came in the choir now, and there were no more pleasant walks down to the station afterwards. He would sit with Miss Grey in another part of the concert-room, and escort *her* away from it, not Mary.

Gradually, but surely, his visits to Vine Cottage ceased. Old Mrs. Silver, accustomed to be treated with courtesy and not caprice, felt very angry with the young man. She observed to Mary that she felt sorry ever to have given him so warm a welcome, and that the man was not worth a remembrance.

The only time Mary could now count upon seeing Frank was at their organ lesson, and then they were never alone. And thus, and thus, they drifted apart.

On Christmas day, the day of peace and goodwill to all men, Mary neither saw nor heard anything of the one most dear to her. She did not see much more of him when the school met again.

Lent approached, and passed onwards to its close, and the estrangement still continued. Mary's heart was very sore within her, and the sad and sombre melodies of the passion hymns were well in keeping with her own feelings. Who would not be touched by the grand old tune "St. Bride," every note of which sounds like the sob of a stricken heart? The great voice of her favourite organ had never been to Mary more human and appealing than it was now; it seemed to be praying with her, striving to comfort her. She had spent many hours of happiness with it, and the hours she now spent with it were sorrowful hours; but it was still, as ever, her faithful friend.

Easter came in, but the "Queen of Feasts" did not bring back Mary Silver's lost lover. How different an Easter was it to Mary's last, only one little year ago! She was traversing that painful bit of life past which so many of its pilgrims have had, alas, to tread before her, earning their bitter experience, as so many more will have to tread again.

Spring passed on into summer, the roses blossomed and fell, the end of the term came again, and Frank had never come back to his allegiance. It was Mary's last term; she was to leave the school now. She still lived on in the "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick," so fond and credulous is loving woman!

The long vacation wore away. And when the School opened again and the students reassembled, Miss Grey came back to it as Mrs. Frank Templeton.

Mary already knew it. On the last day of the vacation Clara Latimer—engaged to spend the day with her at Vine Cottage—carried down the news.

"Don't let it disturb you, Mary, dear," said Clara. "I once thought he paid you a good deal of attention, and that you—you rather liked him; but he was never worthy of you."

Mary did not cry or faint. She had turned very white at the first moment, but she was able to maintain an outward calmness.

"Will you do me a great kindness, Clara," she said, in a low tone: "not to speak of it, or of him, any more."

And Miss Latimer understood.

But in the evening, when her guest had gone, Mary went up to her



own room and shut herself into it. For a long time she stayed there alone, while she faced and fought the first brunt of her trouble. After that, she went down, quiet and dry-eyed, to begin a new life.

A life, as it seemed to her then, out of which all the sweetness and the hope had departed, and in which all the old landmarks were changed. No more going to the School. She could not bear even to visit it now. No more awaking in the morning to the feverish hope of what the day might bring forth for her; no more of the disappointment at night, and its dull, dark pain. Nothing was left her now but her dear old friend the organ at St. John's church, and the monotonous duties in her old home, where she had lived and dreamed her dream of happiness, but which would never seem the same home to her again.

And so the days go on. And the good old lady is as cheerful as ever, and her grand-daughter strives to be. She has a good many music pupils, and plenty of organ-playing to do; and she has taken to help with the parish work, and is not unhappy. Time, the great healer, is laying his hand upon her wound, and it is closing gently. Only her face is not so bright as of yore; the ready smile of former days is rare now; and she has lost her old habit of singing as she goes about the house. Sometimes in the evening, when her work is done, she sits pensively gazing into the fire; and then her grandmother, who has her own fancies about matters, knows that she is thinking of the past.

Once she spoke of Frank Templeton. It was to Miss Latimer. "Is he altered at all, Clara?" she said. "I know you see him sometimes."

The question was put quite suddenly, following upon a silence, and no name was mentioned, but Clara knew at once.

"He looks older and harder," she replied. "He is getting on splendidly in the profession; but report says his marriage is a most unhappy one. His wife—but I'll say nothing of her, and indeed I know nothing to say. She is not liked by anyone."

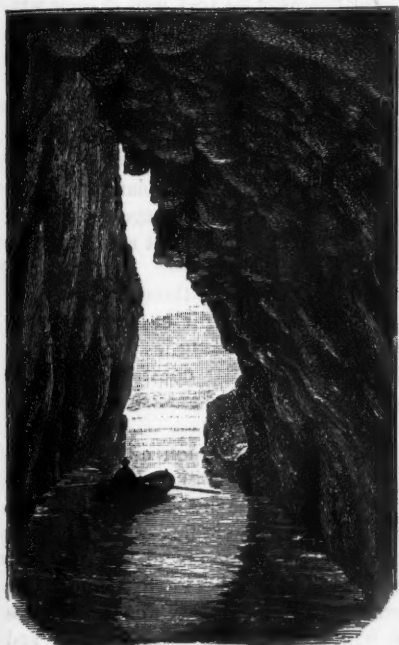
One day, when Mary had business in town, in walking along Brook Street towards Grosvenor Square, she saw Frank Templeton. They met face to face. A deep red flushed his countenance; Mary was conscious that she turned snow white. A cold, ceremonious bow was exchanged, and each passed on.

And for the present that ends it; ends all that is left of Mary Silver's heart life. She says and thinks she will never marry. Probably she never will. But other girls who have suffered from man's faithlessness, and have said the same and vowed it, have found themselves persuaded to break their vow.



## UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND," &c.



BORNHOLM.

WE left Copenhagen one fair evening for Bornholm, an island of the Baltic. The little steamer loosed her moorings about five o'clock, and passed through the crowd of shipping never absent from the broad waters and endless quays of the Danish Capital. We gradually fell away from the many features of the town, now grown friendly and familiar: towers and domes and steeples; and public buildings that here and there reared their magnificent heads above their lesser surrounding lights.

We went down in broad sunshine. Past lighthouses, and Danish men-of-war, and windmills that stood out conspicuously against the evening sky, and re-

minded one of the flat shores of Holland. All this faded away, and gave place to the equally flat shores of Sweden. The sun set in a gorgeous bank of clouds. Twilight crept over the earth, colours faded from the sky, and stars came out. It never grew quite dark. The night was so still and beautiful, it seemed impossible to turn in. Lights flashed from vessels going to and fro, from numberless fishing craft, those "toilers of the sea" who earn their daily bread by night. The passage was supposed to take ten or twelve hours, and we ought to reach Rönne, the chief town of Bornholm, at four or five in the morning. About half way, when daylight had fled, we passed the steamer coming from Rönne. Signals were exchanged, greetings were shouted from opposite decks, and each vessel went her way.

The night wore on. A light broke in the east. Beams darted

upwards like an *Aurora Borealis*. A mountain of fire seemed to be gradually rising above the horizon. Nothing more gorgeous could be imagined. This was long before the sun rose like a chariot wheel, flooding and flaming the sky with a sea of gold, liquid, shifting, ebbing and flowing, as it were, in pulsations of light. The skipper of the little steamer was concerned for our welfare, and thought an hour's sleep worth all the effects of nature that ever were seen or heard of. Mountains of light and gorgeous colourings were all very well in their way, but sleep was better. He spoke a little English, and like most of the skippers in these northern seas, was anxious to do everything in his power for the comfort of his passengers, especially if they were strangers in the land. When he found we had only three days to devote to Bornholm he was full of regret, and advised us to prolong the time if possible.

"You will see it," he said, "and that is all. Your plan must be to hire a carriage for the three days, which will just manage to take you round the island and show you its chief features. But a week would have been well devoted to this interesting spot."

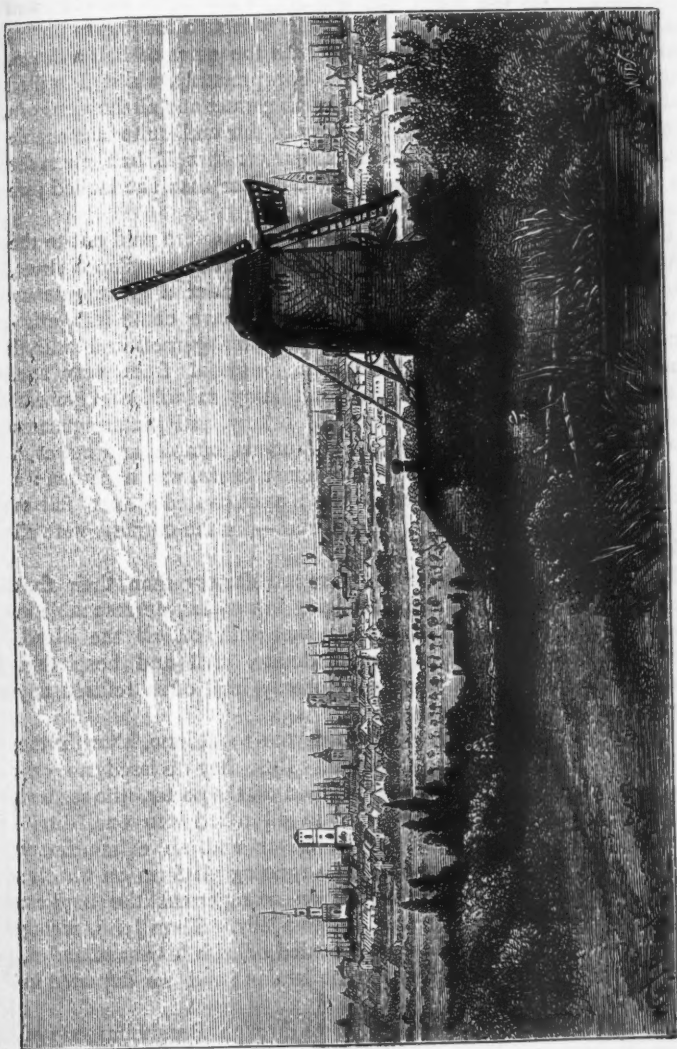
And we afterwards found that though, in those three days, we saw everything the island contained, yet a week might easily have been spent lingering and lounging quietly about the beauties of Bornholm.

About three o'clock in the morning the flat coast of the island opened up, and an hour later, in the full blaze of sunrise, we steamed into the little harbour.

The town looked quaint and primitive, uncommon and unsophisticated. A collection of small houses, of red slanting roofs, of windmills and a solitary church spire. There was little shipping in the harbour. Everything was on a small scale, including the lighthouse, that some time ago was found to be inconveniently placed, and was removed bodily some fifty yards lower down. The first impression was singularly pleasant. There was an individuality about the place that was very refreshing. We had seen nothing like it before, and were evidently out of the world's beaten track. All this promised well for our three days.

We were soon alongside. The skipper beckoned to a decent-looking man, who took charge of our traps and led the way. *Aurora* was still abroad, and we made acquaintance with Rønne in the first flush and beauty of early morning. The streets were quiet and deserted. The houses, small and built of wood painted many colours, were clean and fresh looking. Our way led through the poorer part of the town, given up to fishermen and labourers. To the left, a steep decline ended in a timber yard, a pebbly beach, and a bran new bathing establishment: the latter a primitive arrangement in the shape of a roughly built stage of loose planks some fifty yards long, leading to a number of little floating rooms all under one roof. This was in charge of a good woman, who surprised us by her ready English, until we found that she had spent many years in

America. There she had made some money and returned to her native country when attacked by the mal du pays in middle age.



COPENHAGEN.

Who is it says that in middle age all the failings of early youth return with tenfold force? And if it be so, is it the last throw of the Arch Enemy laying wait for man's soul? Then let the fight be sharp, and quick the victory.

This good woman was wise in her generation. She had not crossed the sea and dwelt in the tents of the stranger for nothing. Her experiences in the new world were brought to bear upon the old : and she charged E.—who could not see water without a longing to plunge into his native element—for his one bath the price of half a dozen, with the most innocent air possible. For presently, whilst I waited and looked about, and revelled in the lapping water and all the signs of a primitive and quiet life, up came a bevy of fair and quite fashionable girls, who paid collectively the exact amount that E. had given for his solitary plunge. No ; the woman was wiser than she looked ; we were disappointed.

But this is anticipating, for our first devotions were paid not to the beach but to the hotel. Following the guide and turning up a street, pebbly paved and grass grown, we dived under a great gateway into an old-fashioned courtyard. It might have come into existence centuries ago. A low building with slanting roofs and latticed windows and overhanging verandahs, beautiful from very age, where creepers trailed and twined and hung in wild and graceful profusion. Once within the house, all beauty and picturesqueness disappeared. The rooms were dark and uncomfortable, and not even particularly clean. But behind the house again, was a garden : a wilderness of roses and other flowers ; a cultivated desert, full of brilliant blossoms and tantalising fruit trees—for the currants were all picked and the cherries were not ripe.

The people of the inn were not more satisfactory than their fruit trees. They were uncivil and disobliging in manner, unreasonable in their charges ; the only instance we met with on all the island. Everywhere else the people were moderate, civil and hospitable, would put themselves out to point your way, and often refused any return for a service rendered.

Happily we had not many hours to devote to Rönne, though the inn people tried their best to detain us. First they declared no carriage was to be had. This excuse disposed of, the porter, who seemed head waiter, boots, and general factotum all rolled into one, disappeared : to return presently with a driver and an extraordinary vehicle that was half hay-cart and half a running platform on wheels : a sort of French cameon. In such an arrangement the hardest traveller would soon have been reduced to a jelly. Then Jehu, seeing that his way was not to be our way, rattled off with his shandaradan, for which he substituted a very decent landau : and we departed in comfort if not in state.

Thus commenced our three days' drive through Bornholm ; one of the most charming drives imaginable, three of the pleasantest days anyone could possibly desire. The weather was worthy of Paradise. Unclouded sunshine and blue skies enlivened our way and gilded the laughing hours. Everything favoured us. Jehu, finding he was not to have things his own way, quietly gave in to ours, and became

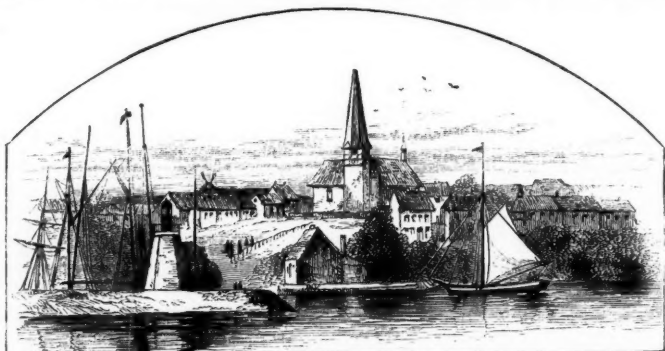
a devoted slave, amiable and obliging throughout. In the end, it is true, he lost his character by charging half as much again as his bargain, and with the inn people to back him it had to be paid under protest. We could not lose our boat and remain behind for the sake of resisting an unjust demand. But it was evident that he had been put up to his dishonesty by the porter, and the two finally went off to a quiet corner to divide the spoil.

Our first day's drive was also one of the most memorable. Bornholm is a scene of overflowing fertility, prosperity and abundance. Every-one seemed well to do. Everywhere barns were filled with plenty and presses burst out with new wine. We were for ever meeting great waggon loads of hay piled high, fresh and crisp and sweet smelling. Everywhere there were fields of waving, ripening, golden corn. We had hardly ever seen their equal. The cherry orchards were legion, and the cherries had only one drawback. They were ripe, luscious, inexhaustible, but generally grew so high as to be out of reach of ordinary mortals. It was vain to ape the fox in the fable: there could be nothing sour about those large, red, glorious berries. Bornholm was veritably a Paradise; a Canaan amidst islands; a land of corn and wine, and no less of roses than of cherries.

We soon left the town behind us and found ourselves in the midst of this fertile country. The roads, long and straight, were wonderfully well-made and well-kept, and facilitated one's progress. Our way led somewhat inland, and the sea to the left was seldom visible. By mid-day we had reached Hasle, our first halting place: a small, primitive village chiefly given over to fishermen. The waters of the Baltic plashed within a few feet of its houses; the brown, sloping, pebbly beach was lively with fishing-boats drawn up high and dry above the tide. Not very much could be said for some of the cottage interiors. They were dark and gloomy, brown and discoloured, as if by constant peat fires whose smoke had no way of escape. To look in at some of the open doorways satisfied one's curiosity without exploring further. Half-dressed children played about the doorsteps, where also lounged mothers and sisters, talking with a gravity which seemed a part of their nature, and staring with great, enquiring eyes at the wayfarers. Some of them were stooping over a washing-tub just inside the doorway; and others, grey-headed old women, whose sun had long passed its meridian, knitting stockings, looked up without pausing in their work. But all were distinguished—men, women, and children, clothes and skin, and general aspect—by a dark brown tinge, as if they, too, as well as their little homes, had become tanned by peat smoke. It threw a certain picturesque colouring over all; an artistic effect pleasant to contemplate upon paper, but not so pleasant in close and familiar contact. We called it the Brown Village, and it left upon us a curious, not by any means disagreeable impression.

The inn was decent, and the people civil. The house was quiet

and clean, and we were in absolute possession. It was not very much more than a cottage upon a large scale, but the good people placed before us an unpretending meal that was yet far better than we had expected, was decently served, and dressed with that savoury cunning none possess better than those primitive cooks who, living in out-of-the-way places, are often thrown upon their resources, and have to make much out of little. Necessity is the mother of invention. One thing we often noticed in these remote little inns. The people, when asked for the bill, never seemed to know what to charge, but hesitated and demurred, and evidently went through some painful mental problem. Whether considering how much they might ask, or how little



RÖNNE.

would repay them, one never knew, but as we were always satisfied with their answers, we will give them the benefit of the doubt.

This inn also had its garden, well stocked with fruit and flowers, but also a sort of cultivated wilderness. It sloped downwards to brown sheds and boathouses and the beach, where the quiet sea broke lazily over the stones with a lapping, soothing, sleepy sound.

But we had a long walk before us to keep us in a state of consciousness. After leaving Hasle, the quiet little brown thoroughfares and all the brown people; after picking a rose in the garden and satisfying the hesitating but moderate claims of the inn people; Jehu came round at the appointed moment in great style; energy and vigour in man and horses. Evidently all their rest had not been spent in idleness. Away we went, followed by numerous gazers, brown-faced, brown-eyed, intensely serious: all with a silence of speech and attitude we chose to interpret into a benediction.

Jehu drove to a certain point beyond which the carriage could not pass: a large white farmhouse, substantially built, with great barns



and stables and out-houses. It looked lonely and deserted. Every-one was away working in distant fields, making and carrying hay. Here we left the carriage to pursue its way inland, on the high road, to Hammeren, the extreme point of the island. Our way led by the sea, over the wonderful cliffs of Bornholm. So we parted company. Jehu whipped up his horses and went clattering down the road in a cloud of dust and consequence. We passed beyond the farm buildings and found ourselves on long stretches of greensward, inexpressibly refreshing after the hot, white road we had lately travelled. Sheep grazed and wandered at will, the very emblem of stupidity and peace and contentment. We found ourselves overlooking the Baltic, far above the level of the sea ; and to right and left stretched the high cliffs and the broken, beautiful coast of this favoured island.

We went on and on, and the walk seemed to grow more and more beautiful. Far below stretched the Baltic, blue and placid as it is not often seen. Small fishing boats, with brown sails here and there upon its surface, suggested Hasle, but for the most part it was a clear, unbroken surface of water ; a painted ocean ; sea, horizon and sky all mingling in one far off, hazy distance.

The coast was broken and diversified even more than most rocky coasts. It stretched out in points, and circled in bays, and swept round in crescents ; a scene and series of magnificent rocks, often arching upwards like the fluted pillars and aisles of a cathedral. Small alcoves and recesses became harbours of refuge, where boats were drawn up safe and sure from the perils of winds and waves. Seagulls flew from point to point across these vast amphitheatres, whirling and clanging and filling the air with their wild cries, diving in and out of the holes and crevices of the rocks. It was a wild scene. The free air was about us, bracing, exhilarating, health-giving as we had yet found it nowhere under these Northern Skies. Nor anywhere had we seen such a view, or revelled in such a walk. Wild, deserted, out of the world, away from all sight and sound of civilisation.

Moors stretched above us, green and undulating. Our path lay at the edge of the cliff. It seemed so little trodden that often it was lost on the cliff side, or amongst the gorse and heather that grew around. We found ourselves overhanging deep precipices, those perpendicular walls of mighty stone, hollowed and honeycombed, that stretched down to the rugged beach, washed by the waters of the Baltic. One longed for a rough sea and a rushing wind, for the furious dash of waves beating and breaking against those mighty bulwarks. What a glorious sight it would be, though safer as we had it to-day. This pathway, exposed and insecure, was not too easy to follow, and in a tempest would be almost impassable.

Then came "St. John's Chapel ;" an almost perpendicular descent in the rocks by means of rough steps, partly of wood, partly cut out of the rock ; a sort of Jacob's ladder. On the beach was a small cave hewn out of a detached fragment of stone, which formed the

Chapel. Probably no congregation had ever been found to fill it. The descent was strewn with wild flowers and ferns that grew in every crack and crevice where root could enter. Over the pebbly beach the sea for ever ebbd and flowed; ever sang its burden to the rocks, the caves, the seagulls, and the sky that covered all this desolate and lonely coast.

It was harder work to remount this Jacob's ladder. The steps were steep and slippery, and one often narrowly escaped a backward roll that would have proved neither pleasant nor profitable. Here and there a stray sheep looked down upon us, as if wondering why we worked so hard in all this blazing sunshine. They skipped from point to point, surefooted as the chamois, and stood on six inches of ground overlooking shuddering depths—but without a shudder. Why could not mortals do the same?

Once more at the top we paused to realise and enjoy the scene; this gathering together of sea and rocks and sparkling air and expanse of blue sky, and seagulls soaring and wheeling with wild clang. Oh, the delight of these grand and silent places, wherever found; these mighty rocks, this restless ocean, these eloquent solitudes. It is heaven to be amongst them—as it was that afternoon. There is no greater pleasure on earth, none more pure and wholesome.

Here and there across the moors one caught sight of distant fields, and men and women at work, and hay that fell to the sickle or was being heaped on to waggons. Then again all this would be lost as our capricious pathway suddenly dipped half-way down the rocks, where we startled the seagulls and sent them seawards with a wild remonstrance against this invasion of their territories. Whilst every now and then a pause was necessary, lest the next step should land us in air, over the steep side, to join the fragments on the shores until such time as the sea claimed us for its own, gathered us to its mighty bosom, and chanted us its eternal cradle song for a requiem.

The afternoon was on the wane when we reached a quaint and curious village or hamlet, which seemed to have nestled itself in between the rocks and the sea, so that if a mighty wave were one day to come, it might all be swept into death and oblivion. A strange spot, with hardly a foothold upon the earth. A narrow thoroughfare, rough and undulating; a cluster of houses eccentrically thrown about; small cottages inhabited by fishermen and others, with a tiny beach below them, where boats were moored. The place had a singular and picturesque, but somewhat poverty-stricken, aspect, as if it had no part or lot in the good fortunes of this prosperous little island.

Near one of the small cottages the road divided, and we had to ask our way. The good woman came out, and with much politeness indicated the somewhat intricate path we had to follow. Five minutes later we stood face to face with another puzzle in the shape of two roads. Hesitating, and turning round, there was the woman

still looking after us. Anticipating our need, she had stood and watched, and now, with energetic signals, made it plain that we must keep to the left.

Desolate and remote this village, which was called Vang, might be; primitive and poor its inhabitants; but barbarous or uncivilised they were not. Kindly and hospitable they are; and, as already remarked, these virtues do not spring from interested motives.

Not far off now, crowning the heights above us, were the ruins of Hammershuus, the end of our pilgrimage. A winding path led to them through a copse or thicket of brushwood and stunted trees, where ferns and wild flowers grew in profusion. Stiles had to be overcome, and here and there small dykes tested one's leaping powers. The steep cliffs of the earlier part of our walk had disappeared, and with them the extreme grandeur of the coast, but the ruins before us stood out boldly on the slopes that were washed by the Baltic. It was a tug to reach them; the final struggle; but at last we stood within the ruins, looking down from crumbling walls on all the change and decay of man's art and handiwork; looking upon the rocky slopes, eternal in their might and majesty.

These mediæval ruins date back to the 13th century, and were then in the hands of the Church. So, also, at one time was the whole island. They are some of the most extensive ruins in Europe; and to antiquarians some of the most interesting. But the whole island possesses a store of antiquities of great value; runic stones, and circular churches, and other evidences of its ancient history.

Change and decay have set their seal upon the ruins of Hammershuus. Many portions have entirely disappeared, and probably more would have done so but for occasional restorations. It was first built by Erlandsen, Archbishop of Lund, and in those unsettled times it frequently changed hands: now belonging to the Church, now to the State. Crowning those desolate and distant rocks, it must have been a grand and noble object; from its remoteness, a sort of wonder of the world. Fierce were the fights it witnessed, great the bloodshed, legion the prisoners that languished in its dungeons. Some of these dungeons have preserved substantial traces of their existence, as if they had been the most solidly built portions of the great structures.

In those days it may be that no other building was in sight beyond the dependencies of the great castle, and of these no traces remain. Even now the ruins stand out alone and desolate, with no modern tenement to disturb their romantic influence and impression. But on the other side, in the hollow, beyond the wood and the wild heather, near the lighthouse of Hammeren, is an inn that, with its numerous buildings, forms quite a small colony. It owes its existence, and whatever prosperity it may enjoy, to the ruins; and in this way, as well as in other ways, the deeds we do live after us. From the castle heights this small cluster of houses looked buried in



RUINS OF HAMMERSHUUS.

a hollow, sheltered from the North and East winds, which blow here with a mighty vengeance.

The inn looked quiet and deserted, but when we reached it we found every room occupied by a crowd of noisy people; a disturbing influence that gave one a rude shock. Excursionists, Danes or Swedes, who, staying in Bornholm for a season, had come over for the day in waggonettes, and now made the place hideous with "the loud laughter which bespeaks the vacant mind."

Here we were to have met Jehu, but though hours had passed since we had seen him disappear in a cloud of dust, he had not yet turned up. This was rather bad behaviour on his part. All our goods and chattels for the time being were in his possession. Nothing here could be replaced, and we were not in a condition for a walking tour through the island.

To pass away the time we ordered dinner and inspected the premises. But the larder had been severely taxed, and we had to be content with very modest fare. In comparison with this, we had feasted sumptuously at Hasle. The whole inn seemed in possession of the enemy; and we felt towards them as Church and State must have felt towards each other in the middle ages, when fighting for castle and crown. We asked if they could give us rooms in case Jehu failed altogether, and they produced a couple of dark closets which would have banished sleep from the most weary.

Opposite the inn a sloping hill hid the sea and broke the strength of the North wind. Here cattle grazed and led a quiet life. And here we found a traveller who, like ourselves, had come with surprise upon this noisy crowd. He was a Frenchman, walking leisurely through the island; a more satisfactory way of seeing places when time and physical strength are in favour of it. He had spread his rug upon the green slopes, this Frenchman, and thrown himself down with a book. But there was no peace to be had even here. Every cow came up in turn to look at him, with great questioning eyes and horns, until they forced him to move on and leave them masters of the situation. The sea broke and plashed not many yards away, and in rough weather the wind carries the spray and foam into the very inn itself, and doors and windows are kept fast closed. Yet one would rather have encountered those rough blasts than this noisy assembly.

The shades of evening were beginning to fall when Jehu at length made his appearance. He looked conscious and guilty, and evidently had spent the afternoon in some well-known haunt, where possibly he had boon companions and a favourite brew. With the exception of a small town here and there on the sea-coast, the houses and settlements in Bornholm are few and far between, and the drivers are sure of a welcome from every door they pass. They bring news from the outer world, produce a little variety and excitement in lives that must be terribly monotonous. He was extremely anxious to remain the

night in our present quarters ; but without pushing on, our three days' task would not be accomplished. Therefore, after a short rest to the horses—they must have rested most of the afternoon—we once more set off on our travels.

The road was gloomy and desolate, but a certain grandeur about it was made more impressive by the gathering twilight, which here lingers long. On the extreme northern point of the island to our left the lighthouse of Hammerberg was already flashing out its warning. A small lake reposed between us and the rising hills : "well stocked with fish," said Jehu, who by extra civility was trying to make up for playing truant. "Would we like to drive round and inspect the lighthouse?" But we preferred to keep on our way and lose no more time.

Turning southward, we came to Sandvig, pretty and picturesque, but little more than a fishing village. It was built on the sloping hills, and the cottages stretched down almost to the very edge of the shore. There was something so primitive and interesting about it ; it looked so clean and quiet—as if here one need fear no inroads of noisy excursionists—that one felt half inclined to put up at Sandvig for the night. But, whatever might be our own impression, it was evidently no favourite spot of the driver's. Here was no favourite brew or boon companion. We saw it as plainly as if he had said so. He whipped up his cattle, and swept past the little houses and the quiet church, and had only one reply to any remark : "Very bad hotel." Perhaps it was true. Certainly it must have been humble and unpretending. But so was the inn near the ruins of Hammershuus, where he had shown himself regardless of consequences by suggesting a halt for the night.

And we almost wondered at our strength of mind in leaving Hammershuus, in spite of the noisy crowd and bad rooms. For there was a great charm about the place, a solemnity about the scenery difficult to describe. The disposition of the hills and their undulations ; the great stretches of green, quiet slopes ; the remoteness of the inn from the world ; the sea rolling up, breaking and surging, ebbing and flowing, within a few feet of us ; all threw out their subtle influence. Above all, one felt impressed by those rocky slopes crowned by the ruins that stood out so clearly and sharply against the calm evening sky ; ruins that carried one back to the middle ages and threw their glamour and romance over the spot, conjuring up pictures of by-gone glory, when the Church had so much power in her own hands, and did not always use it with discretion.

It had been difficult to tear oneself away from those ruins within an hour or two of seeing them for the first time. To turn one's back upon them was to do so for ever. Life is short, and there is much to be done, and it was improbable that we should ever see Bornholm again. We longed to see the ruins in the glow of early morning ; when the sun, rising out there across the sea, in the East, threw all its



beauty upon the water and gilded the crumbling ruins with its magic touch, bringing back life to the dead. Perhaps, too, all the impression of our afternoon's walk was upon us, and it does not do to multiply impressions too quickly. So, many reasons had conspired to keep us that night at the little inn under the shadow of the ruins: not least of all, perhaps, the fact that the walk, with its winding paths and Jacob's ladders, had been terribly tiring, and rest had seemed for the present the most desirable thing on earth.

Yet we went our way, in spite of all. In spite of the Frenchman who found no resting-place on the slopes for the cows, and who had begged us to keep him company in the solitary inn. But we pointed out to him that though solitary, it was by no means deserted, and though surrounded by desolation without, it was noisy enough within. Our time, too, was limited. And so we had gone our way in spite of Jehu, who evidently left behind him attractions he was loth to part with. But we had no pity for him. We left the ruins clearly outlined against the sky, gave them a last, long, lingering gaze, listened to their solemn message, and saw them no more.

We had our reward. The drive to Allinge, our night's resting-place, was the most wild and weird bit of scenery we encountered during the whole three days. In broad daylight it would have lost nearly all its charm and effect. Gloomy, grand and desolate, remote from the world and all evidences of life, it made an impression upon us which yet remains. In daylight, also, all the beauty and depth and desolation of the little lake would have been absent. Even Sandvig itself might have looked less picturesque and alluring. But in situation it will always be far preferable to Allinge.

On we went, through an undulating country, the sea close to us on the left, and always visible. Before long the lights of Allinge shone out in the gathering gloom, and we clattered through the long street of the little town. It did not look half so picturesque as Sandvig, nor half so quiet, whilst there was more pretence about it. Men lounged about and stared lazily—it was their hour of repose. Work was over for the day for some of them, and had not commenced for those who went out upon the deep and spent their nights toiling. From the open windows of one small house there came sounds of music and song, whilst a small crowd of people, quite fashionable in evening dress, moved about the lighted rooms. A golden-haired youth—the *jeunesse dorée* of Allinge—was bending sentimentally over a siren, equally young and fair, from whom proceeded the sweet sounds. Others were elegantly turning over photographs.

All this we caught at a glance as we passed hastily. It was like a *tableau vivant*, vivid in its impressions, thrown out in strong relief by the light within contrasted with the shadows without—though it was not yet dark. The only wonder was that there should be so much display; windows open, uncurtained, exposed to the gaze of the loungers, who hung about and peered curiously. Perhaps it is the

habit of this small place ; and habit is second nature. The familiar ceases to be strange.

Allinge possesses some 800 inhabitants. It consists very much of one long street, built almost on the water's edge. Opposite the very house just described was the small harbour : a harbour within a harbour, as it were ; so that little vessels coming in performed a zigzag. It was strongly constructed, with a small lighthouse. A few fishing boats lay in its shelter, and at low water we found that the less said about the smells the better. Just beyond the harbour was the inn, to which Jehu conducted us in state. We passed under a gate-way into a great court-yard ; a dog barked us a welcome ; lights gleamed in the windows ; there was a small stir and commotion ; a fat landlady attended by a bustling hand-maiden came out upon the steps.

No doubt about our remaining here for the night. Rooms were quickly given to us, small but clean and satisfactory. They looked on to the sea, and we could watch the fishing-boats putting out. The whole place was primitive, but it was quiet. The rooms opened on to the general sitting-room, where travellers took their meals, and where we had to deposit our boots. How travellers manage who, on arriving, find a roomful, it was difficult to imagine. It cannot be a comfortable sensation to put down your boots in the face of a dozen people at supper. Besides, a man without his boots feels taken at a disadvantage. Yet this once happened at Allerheiligen, in the Black Forest.

We had arrived late at night and gone straight to our room. Presently we opened the door, expecting vacancy and a passage. But behold a large room, once the refectory of the monks, and to-night the refectory of lay men and women all earnestly engaged in supper. There seemed to be a thousand present, and probably there were at least forty. In a moment eighty eyes were focussed in one direction. We were probably taken for a ghost, for these were ghostly quarters, and we were in ghostly costume, ready to step into our well-earned couch. The sensation was horrible. Some of the ladies screamed, and perhaps some of them fainted ; whilst we beat a hasty retreat, and mentally consigned the whole company to the regions of the departed monks.

Here at Allinge we found no such disaster. The sitting-room was empty and quiet. There might be ghosts lurking about, but they were invisible. We do not dread the spirits of another world half so much as the grosser substances of this. Very soon the whole place was in repose. We watched for a time the lights of the fishing craft upon the calm, clear waters of the Baltic. Now and then a far off voice or a song came rolling quietly over the tranquil surface. Then we, too, turned in, and soon all was lost in oblivion. At Allerheiligen our dreams had been haunted by a myriad eyes, but here we slept the dreamless sleep of the just : until early, too early, the next morning, the chambermaid woke us to another day, and we found the sun already high and brilliant in the heavens.

## MANY WATERS QUENCH NOT LOVE.

(FOUNDED ON FACT.)

"WHAT was all that commotion about just now?"

"Oh, nothing. It was only some stupid old man who had not been in the town for ever so long going by, and Mrs. Brown called us to see. What have I done with my gloves? I *know* I brought them in here. Oh, there they are, under that chair. What plagues things are!—Coming, Annette, coming!"

"Did she say who the old man was?"

But the words were spoken to empty air, for the heroine of the gloves was already flying down stairs in the best approved costume for the fashionable promenade.

Her great-aunt, Miss Dorothy Fielding, leant back, meditating, in her chair. She was a cripple of many years' standing from rheumatism and sciatica, and could move but little without assistance.

She was also very old; but although her face had many wrinkles there was abundant play of expression about it yet, and living evidence that she had by no means outlived her faculties. An ordinary face it never had been, although, equally, she had never been beautiful. In her youth some had called her plain, some good-looking, some pretty; but full of life and expression that face had always been; full of character, and that no ordinary one; full of vivacity, the light of which after four-score years was even yet unquenched.

Her eyes were dark brown, sensible, true and very kindly. Any one with a degree of imagination in their brains would have felt certain her companionship even now would not be dull; so sympathetic, bright, and, in the evening-time of life, so placidly content was the countenance that looked forth under the matronly cap and thick grey hair.

She had been full of love and lovers with the brightest, once upon a time; she had dreamt many a waking dream, had been attractive and popular; but she had never married. She was Miss Fielding now, as she had been at the beginning of the chapter.

The young people around her were on the whole a selfish, pre-occupied set, who had few thoughts to spare from dress and gaiety, and who would as soon have thought of giving up one of their pleasures to sit for an hour with Aunt Dorothy as of being hospital nurses.

When she had come amongst them some months previously, she had looked forward to being their confidante on various points. All her soul kindled yet over a real love affair, and she could sympathise also with minor matters of small flirtation and girlish fun. But even

she could make little of these great-nieces of hers. Her innate good taste recoiled from their fastness, with its unscrupulous stratagems, their loud-spoken ill-nature towards other girls, and the utter absence of all love, worthy the name, from their scheming, worldly, and unwomanly love affairs.

Their father had taken this house, which was large and handsome, for the four months' season at Fairbeach, and as he was very fond of his aunt, and rooms could be spared for her use, he had asked her to come to them for that period. Old Miss Fielding, being very comfortably off, had never sunk into the immovable habits that might have been expected from her age and infirmities, and she accepted the invitation and enjoyed the change. She had long ago made her intentions plain as regarded the money she had to leave; it was all to go to this, her only nephew, with the exception only of a few legacies to old servants, friends, and God-children.

One of these last was her niece Laura; and whether it is that people are by nature like their God-parents or not, Laura was very much the nicest of the four Miss Fieldings. She had a happy disposition, and could bear a disappointment without going into depths of despair or getting thoroughly cross until the next diversion dawned, as her sisters did. It was, alas, a very uneducated character, for Mr. Fielding was easy-going and over indulgent to his children, while their mother was a worldly woman of lady-like exterior, and very comfortable principles as regarded coarse-minded schemes for marrying her daughters "well."

Laura, therefore, as might have been expected, was no paragon of perfection, but she was obviously improvable, than which few better things can be said of any human being. Not only good temper, but a little more earnestness of aim, a little more delicacy of feeling, and greater warmth of affection distinguished her from her sisters. Aunt Dorothy took her home to her large heart and believed in her, and Laura was, half-unconsciously, already the better from this sojourning of their aunt among them.

She came into the room soon after her sisters' departure, and was asked the same questions given before.

"It was an old Mr. Picardy, who lives a few miles off, and had not been in the town for ages. He has driven in an open carriage up Friar's Hill."

"Then he must return this way?" said Aunt Dorothy.

"Yes, I suppose so."

Humming a tune, Laura went on rummaging a distant table-drawer for something that she wanted—things *do* mislay themselves in a thoroughly untidy house.

"Laura," said her aunt, "come here, my dear. I used to know this Mr. Picardy, formerly, and should much like to see him passing back. Do you think, without saying anything to anyone, you could manage to wheel me in my chair into the drawing-room?"

It was on the tip of Laura's tongue to raise objections. Aunt Dorothy kept entirely in her own rooms, and it would be quite an innovation to establish her in the drawing-room. But she just looked at her aunt's face and saw there so much eagerness and wistfulness that something stirred her heart.

She was almost surprised at herself for the alacrity with which she said :

"Certainly, Aunt. Let us try."

"The drawing-room door is of course wider than this," said Aunt Dorothy, "so we need take no measurements. Go, my dear, and clear away the mats in the way, and see that there is room made in the best window for seeing from, and close the folding doors. Be quick, or somebody will come."

Even in old age, Aunt Dorothy's clear brain could foresee difficulties and provide against them, so that her niece had nothing to do but obey her orders. There is a certain pleasure in following distinct directions, even if given in rather a peremptory way—as these were. Aunt Dorothy did not "shilly-shally" to the end : she was no "limp" person, even yet, when anything was to be done, and these are always the best captains in war or out of it.

With a look of strange excitement on her face, she waited Laura's return. Almost in a dream she heard her niece's voice saying, "Now, the coast is clear," and answered she was ready, with a singular feeling of talking in her sleep.

Carefully through the first door, carefully through the second, with a little difficulty about the turn, was the chair propelled. Easily then, along the smooth carpet to the window, underneath which the carriage, of necessity, must pass.

"Thank you, dear child. He was a very dear friend in times gone by. Now leave me," said Aunt Dorothy. "If anyone comes they must be shown to the inner room. I wish to be alone."

And Laura went away with a suspicion of the truth that made her smile a little half-sadly, then sigh, and sighing, think : "We shall all be old some day."

Meanwhile Aunt Dorothy looked out of her window, which faced one of the principal hotels and commanded a long stretch of street, winding up towards Friar's Hill. No carriage was in sight. It was the other window of the room that had the sea-view, but to the right of the houses a pretty piece of country was seen, where "heaths, starred with broom" mingled their gold with the sunset rays that poured on them from the opposite horizon towards which the sun was declining.

Aunt Dorothy did not see it just then. She leaned back in her wheel-chair, and covered her eyes with her hands. A half-smile—but it was a very sad one ; much sadder than any tears could have been—was on her lips, and she said in an undertone :

"'I am again for Cydnus, to meet Mark Antony!'"

Then came silence.—She was not an old woman any longer. Oh

no ! It was all a mistake that she was crippled and helpless, that life and its abundant opportunities had drifted into the past, and she was only a great-aunt without any nearer ties to bind her. Young, strong and straight—alas what words are those to whom the realities are gone by for ever !—but straight, and strong and young she stood, once more, in fancy.

Was she twenty-three, or twenty-four, or twenty-five ?—No matter ; now one, and now the other. She was Dorothy Fielding, with life stretching out before her, fair, as if glistening with the sheen of early morning, and breathing promises to her that surely nothing could belie. Within her stirred

“ Impatient wishes that besieged the sky,  
Nor disbelief of any miracle, save that life's longings and its hopes  
could die.”

She was Dorothy Fielding, full of love, hope, and a thousand fulfillments that half unrecognised came lavishing their joy about her path. The turf sprang under her tread, but her feet sprang quicker. The very best of life, the very fairest of its hours were hers.

And who was that beside her, whose look thrilled hers with that first, desperately-sweet, never-to-be-forgotten shock of love's desire ? Who was it lingered with her on matchless eves of June, when roses bloomed around, surely sending some intoxication into the air ? Who was it jested those immortal jests, or holding joy one moment at arm's length with the very caprice of happiness, followed after it the keener when the graver time was spent ?

Ernest Picardy, always—Ernest Picardy. There had been others, many others, who had loved her smiles. What mattered any one of them ? There can be but one Jove on an Olympus, and that one was Ernest Picardy.

Since time began, all love-making and all lovers had lacked somewhat until now. And oh, never again to the voice of love let any heart throb so wildly, so joyously, so regardless of imagined doom ! Until now, nobody had gauged it all quite thoroughly. The delightful peril of risking a life's happiness against half-an-hour's caprice, was surely until now an untried adventure. And the morning and the evening, the sunshine, and the rain, the very birds and breezes moved to one refrain :

“ There's nothing half so sweet in life,  
As Love's young dream.”

And years went on, until the bond grew firmer, and Ernest Picardy, handsome, oh, so handsome, young and gallant, ruled over love's kingdom, and should rule for ever and for ever.

Stop there. Even in memory—even now—she shrinks from the pain of living over what came after. The foolish pride, the mistimed offence, the misadventure and misery of it all, when she called wildly on heaven to help her ; when she clung desperately to the hope that



blessed chance or strange adventure might come in friendly aid ; when the fond belief still lingered that some kind heart, ere hers was broken quite, would take home her sorrows and come to her rescue. *That*, and *that*, and *that*—such little things—might have been done and all saved ; and no one did them, and the critical time went by, and the world went circling on, and mad cries of resistance and despair went up to heaven, and still there was no answer.

Let it all be forgotten now. A long life-time lay between that time and this. If the edge of the weapon still be keen, let it lie in the sheath. It is in the happy time, the magical time she lives now, while she waits to look upon the lover from whom she parted half-a-century ago.

She saw the carriage coming from afar. Two men were in it, one of middle-age, with but slightly-grizzled hair ; the other old with rime of many winters on his scanty locks. She knew him at once—the lover of her youth. She would have known him anywhere. But oh ! the change. Yet the features were handsome still, and a calm dignity was on them, that looked like an habitual expression. Age, extreme old age, was there, but in no repellant form. Only the eyes that had sought her own, and wrecked her peace of mind so sorely, would never look again on maiden, sky, or meadow. Their lids were drooped so as completely to conceal them : for during many years he had been stone-blind.

He sat with his face slightly upturned, as is the manner with blind people, his hands resting on the head of his staff, and as she looked down on him, so fully visible to her as he was, he turned in conversation to his companion and smiled.

Do not the old colours of the regiment, riddled with shot, battered and stained out of all their early beauty, bring to us a sigh of loving tribute to the glories so present to the spirit, so little discernible otherwise now ?

The tears rained from the old woman's eyes as she looked, so changed and yet with such an ineradicable likeness to the days of youth was that smile of her former lover.

The carriage stopped. The younger gentleman dismounted with some papers, with which he disappeared for a few minutes into the hotel. The old man, gay, active, handsome Ernest Picardy that once had been, sat still, patiently and calmly, as one who knew well how to wait. And who knows that his heart did not respond with some deep-seated sensation of peace and fulfilled desire to the fervent blessing breathed on him from above, by the woman watching so near—the woman he had loved so passionately long ago ? Face to face they had met at last, although only one was conscious of that meeting, and her soul cried out to his, full of old love and new—yes, love even *now*, freshly-born of tender ruth and woman's undying faithfulness.

His friend rejoined him, and the carriage drove on. It was "adieu pour jamais" between them now. But when the last sight of him was lost, she covered her face with her trembling hands and murmured forth:

"Thank God! Ah, so much, much better than the meeting I had hoped for and so often planned. What Heaven gives comes always mystical with satisfaction. What could we have done if we had spoken of it all, but mingle our tears and pierce each other's soul once more with unavailing regrets? Better for us both to be spared it. But oh! my love, my love! true to me, I know and feel it; only parted by our own mad pride and folly! We are calm enough now! We have both grown old, very old, my dear; but it has been together, although apart. If your brow had been smooth as I remember it, and your locks raven as when I saw them last, I could not have claimed you for my own as I do now. We should have parted company *then*; but *now* we are one—we were young together, we are old together, and the tie of mutual age has a sacredness in it which nothing can disturb. And then, when this last, brief portion of our life is over, we shall meet at last, my love, without a tear, young, and perfected, and blest for ever in the kingdom of God."

Again her tears streamed forth. Excitement and weakness had shaken her self-control to its foundations; and for a few moments of rare indulgence she did not stem their flow. Only for a few moments, however, for aged eyes cannot weep long.

When Laura came back, Aunt Dorothy had returned to perfect calmness, and greeted her with a smile that had conquered sorrow.

This girl was certainly growing more and more kindly-natured from contact with her aunt. She said, quite gently now:

"Was he greatly altered, Auntie? You must have seen much change in him, I fear."

"I knew him," returned her aunt. And then, after a pause: "He was my lover for many years, and I never loved but him. Only, misfortune, chiefly of our own making, rash and foolish that we were, came between us."

"You are very white, Aunt Dorothy. Had you not better, after all this, let me bring you some wine?"

"No, my child, nothing. Leave me here alone a little while longer, for I want to rest, and may God bless you and make you truly His."

Laura looked at her aunt half-frightened at the solemnity of the words and tone; but already Aunt Dorothy had turned from her and was gazing abstractedly on the moor, where the gorse and broom caught from the sunset blood-red reflections, that rippling like waves over their surface, left shadows of deep purple in between.

When she was alone: "I have had a very happy life," said Aunt Dorothy; "although some things were denied, and the greatest joy

granted me was followed by the direst sorrow. But I buried the sorrow. It was the joy that lived and has been my companion and comfort all these long, long years; the joy of having known love fully once; the certainty that all true love holds immortality within it. Thank God that He gave me strength to take up many cares and interests and to live 'with all my might.' It has not been a useless life, and now at the end, He has given me this great wish of my heart, this crowning joy—to look even yet again upon the face of Ernest Picardy."

She had no more tears to shed, they were done with for ever, and she was very calm.

Two or three sighs she gave, but there was nothing to tell whether they sprang from sadness or from the satisfaction of a deep content.

When Laura returned she found her aunt still sitting there, but her spirit had flown. Disease of the heart had long threatened, and agitation so unwonted at her age was all that was needed to snap life's silver cord. The fulness of her cup had overflowed, and the hour in which she had looked again upon her early love had been her last.

In one heartfelt Nunc Dimittis, she had passed from age and helplessness and pain into the country where such things are not, and it is many a year now since Ernest Picardy joined her there.

When she lay in her coffin and they went to look at her and give her a last kiss, who had always spoken to them such wise and loving words, they were awed, even the most careless, at the unutterable joy and peace upon her face.

And they said that a look of her youth had come back to it, in this her final sleep.





### THE LEGEND OF MYDDFAI.

THE VAN POOLS, BLACK MOUNTAINS, SOUTH WALES.

A SHEPHERD, so the legend runs, who fed  
His sheep upon the mountain near the lake,  
Beheld one morn, a form of beauty bred  
Rise from the flood ; he, gazing, longed to make  
The form his own ; his own, for love's sweet sake ;  
For never had he seen a thing so fair.  
Her eyes were radiant as the stars which wake  
At even, yet they filled him with despair,  
For how could mortal wed a spirit light as air ?

Long summer days he sought in vain the spell  
With which to bind the gentle maiden's heart ;  
His simple fare : sweet herbs from hill and dell :  
Of these his modest wealth he offered part,  
But could not force her love by any art.  
One evening as he sat by thought oppressed,  
She, swift as light, more quick than troutlet's dart,  
Rose at his feet—hands clasped upon her breast—  
“ Fair Mortal I have heard ; I rise at thy request.”

She spoke ; he saw the gleaming of her locks,  
And heard a voice more sweet than summer wind.  
“ Yes, shepherd, I will wed thee, brave the shocks  
Of man's poor life ; but if thou prove unkind,

Or twice should strike me, then my vow shall bind  
My life no longer ; hither I will turn,  
And thou, in grief and loneliness, shalt find  
The truth of that which men are slow to learn—  
That love which lights their lives is fiery flame to burn."

So they were wed, and to the shepherd's cot  
Was brought the maiden of the lonely mere ;  
She filled with sunshine all his humble lot,  
And they were happy for a happy year.  
No longer ; for the stroke of doom was near.  
It chanced some folk were married in the vale,  
And they were bidden ; but instead of cheer  
When all the rest were merry, she sat pale,  
And marred the marriage feast with moan and woeful wail.

Her husband, wroth to see his young wife weep,  
Smote sharply on her arm as white as snow,  
And asked her why she wept ; she turned her deep,  
Reproachful eyes on him. "Alas, I know  
That nought but sorrow from this feast shall flow  
To these, who loveless wed. Ah me ! in vain  
My maiden heart foretold my wedded woe.  
Beware, lest, smitten by thy hand again,  
I seek the kindly flood aglow with summer rain."

Another year went by ; and lo ! a grave  
Was opened to receive the loveless bride,  
And surging tears the mourners' cheeks did lave,  
But she stood smiling at the shepherd's side.  
And then again he struck her wrist, and cried,  
"Shame on thee, wife, to mock when others weep !"  
"I needs must joy," she said, and softly sighed :  
"The dead are happy ; from life's rocky steep  
Love's mighty tide doth bear her children to the deep."

Then she was gone. The legend tells how sad  
The shepherd left his sheep to watch the mere ;  
And how at times his grief grew mild, and glad  
He hailed the star which tells that day is near ;  
But ne'er to him his love did reappear.  
Yet, some aver, when dawn begins to break  
On one, the longest day of all the year,  
A breathing's space, the maid, for old love's sake,  
Doth raise her golden locks above the glowing lake.

JOHN JERVIS BERESFORD, M.A.

## A SHOWER OF DAFFODILS.

## I.

**I**N a world where the real and the unreal travel side by side, and the visible and the invisible blend within the consciousness, who shall assert what is possible or impossible?

The strange events, which this story is to unfold, are absolutely true, and cannot be explained away.

It was seven o'clock in the evening of a certain March day when a young man of prepossessing appearance sauntered up to St. James's Hall. Madame Schumann was to play this evening, and the crowded staircase leading to the orchestra had overflowed into Piccadilly Place.

The young man paced up and down restlessly. A university friend had promised to meet him at Victoria, but he had not turned up, being probably too deep in his investigation of vortices to remember so trifling an engagement as a concert.

The young fellow began to debate within himself whether he would not go back to his hotel and look over his monograph for the "Royal" and "cut" the concert; but at that moment a cab drove up, and an old lady descended, all in a flutter, followed by a slight girl dressed in a fantastic costume of some soft Indian fabric. Her dark hair hung about her shoulders in waving masses, and rested against a clear and brightly-coloured olive cheek. About her neck was an orange china-silk shawl, its deep fringe entangled in her hair. She carried a light flower-basket filled with daffodils. In her haste to leave the cab she missed the step, and would have fallen had not the young man we have noticed sprung forward and caught her. But the daffodils! They spread themselves like a golden carpet upon the pavement.

"Oh, Mrs. Hamilton," exclaimed the girl, "my poor daffodils! And after all the pains we have taken too."

Mrs. Hamilton did not reply to this lament. She was thanking the polite stranger, who was now picking up the scattered flowers and putting them into the dainty basket.

"Thanks to the March wind the pavement is dry and clean," he said, as he replaced the last flower and handed the basket to its owner.

He looked into her eyes as he did this and almost started. He had never in all his experience seen such an earnest face as this girl's. The eyes were at once bright and searching, frank and timid. He could find no word to describe them. But he only looked into them a moment, and heard her thank him, and then



the old lady spirited her away. As she passed, a sweet, subtle scent from her soft drapery saluted him. He followed the pair at a distance. They were taking orchestra tickets.

"You had better give up your project, Evelyn," he heard the old lady say. "We are so late, there will be no chance of a chair in the orchestra; we had better go to the balcony."

He was now where he could see the girl's face. Her colour deepened and her lips quivered, and the dark eyes grew momentarily brighter as she said: "Dear Mrs. Hamilton, do let us try: I may never get another chance." The appeal was answered by a kindly consent, and then the two ladies went to join the crowd of musical enthusiasts in Piccadilly Place.

There was no thought of the hotel and the monograph in the young man's mind now. He at once took an orchestra ticket, and the recommendation that he should go to the gallery, as the orchestra would be full, passed unheeded.

How it all came about he could never have told, but hesitation about points of vantage in the crowd, which led to much changing of seats, may have helped it. In any case the scientist found himself once more breathing the delicate scent of Evelyn's soft drapery. He was seated in the third row from the platform, and the lady of the daffodils was directly in front of him, talking in low, glad tones to her companion. She removed the silk shawl, and brushed the stranger who had served her with the soft fringe. Then he saw her handing the flowers to all near her with some directions he did not catch. But soon each one in the first two rows had a daffodil. Why was he not in the first or second row he thought? And then he wondered what madness possessed him to be caring about such a thing, when this science tripos at Cambridge had hitherto fully absorbed him. He had had no time to think of women's looks. But, now that he had gained his honours, his youth and his heart seemed all in a moment to have asserted themselves, to claim him as their tardy but willing slave.

During the Dvorak quartet Joachim and the rest got but little of his attention. He was studying the rapt expression of the sweet face in front; for she had turned slightly, and he could gaze on the delicate profile to his heart's content—or discontent, for would she not at the close of the concert be carried away out of his sight for ever?

Mdlle. Badia's tender rendering of one of Mozart's airs suited his mood; but he was all the time speculating about the daffodils.

That mystery was soon explained, for as the singer gave place to Madame Schumann, who appeared in her lace mantilla, and greeted her old friends with her well-known gracious smile, the daffodils descended in a golden shower at her feet. Evelyn, in throwing hers, dropped one behind, and it fell into the young man's hat, which he was holding upon his knees. With a smile, half triumphant, half sad,

he placed it in his pocket-book, side by side with notes on jelly-fishes. It was the first time that sentiment had come into close proximity with science as far as he was concerned.

The sonata Madame Schumann played was Beethoven's "Les Adieux." That speaking music had all at once a terrible significance. "Les Adieux" must be silently said by him, and then there would be "L'Absence."

But as he dreamed, the joyful tones of the "Retour" broke upon his ear, and he was sure this was a prophecy for him. There would be a "Retour"—when or how he did not try to think—but he had not seen that exquisite face for the last time.

So, when Gounod's song, "Le Printemps," was sung, and the singer had left the stage, he caught himself repeating over and over to himself:

"Vois! le soleil étincelle,  
Et sa clarté qui ruisselle  
Me semble encore plus belle  
Dans tes beaux yeux!"

During the performance of the last piece, a Haydn quartet, he noticed the girl making a little sign of recognition to some one in the balcony. He followed the direction of her eyes, and to his amazement beheld the friend who was to have met him, smiling back at her. His heart beat wildly. He now saw a way to the "Retour."

The concert over, the ladies entered a cab and drove away, and our hero of science went towards the balcony exit, and soon encountered his friend.

"Well, Richmond, how did we manage to miss each other?" said the one who had sat in the orchestra.

"To tell the truth, Hartley, I indulged in some mulled claret after dinner, and ——"

"Surely mulled claret could not cause you to forget," broke in Hartley, laughing.

"No," replied the mathematician, "but I was turning a spoon in the glass, and there was the vortex, and I got thinking of the forces."

"Mathematics be banished!" said the science man, handing a cigar to his friend and lighting one himself. "Come along to the 'Grand' with me. I have something I want to ask you about."

"I will go as far as Trafalgar Square with you, but I won't go into the hotel to-night. I must get back to Denmark Hill."

"Well, then, Richmond, you seemed to know the ladies who sat in front of me to-night—who are they?"

"Oh," said Mr. Richmond, in a tone which implied that he had expected something much more important, "they are neighbours of ours at Denmark Hill. They have recently built a pretty little place there, and are come to live in it. They give very pleasant little dinners, at which one always meets nice people."

"Is the young lady ——"

"Oh, she is no relation; she is a Miss Raymouth, who has been brought up by the Hamiltons. There is some sort of mystery connected with her; so a friend of theirs told me. Molesworth, the artist. He seemed a good deal interested, I thought."

"I don't see why he should be," said Philip Hartley, knocking off his cigar ash with his gloved finger.

"Why should he not be?" returned the other, in a surprised tone. "He is painting her for the Academy, as—as—I forget what, but some legendary beauty. She wears a curious ring, and in that ring there is ——"

"An engagement ring?" rather sharply interrupted Hartley.

"Oh, no; quite the contrary. Molesworth says that ring would prevent her marriage."

"Nothing but a wedding-ring can keep a man from thinking of such a woman."

"Really, Hartley, if you rave like that I shall think you are in love: you who have promised yourself to science!"

"I won't disguise the fact from you that I have caught the fever which men talk of, and which I have laughed at," was the half-jesting answer. "I can't account for it, but her eyes chained me."

"I would advise you to be careful, old fellow. I should not like to see you unhappy, and there *is* something strange in the history or antecedents of that girl."

"Get me an introduction and I will take the risk," said Philip Hartley.

"I can introduce you to the house quite easily, if you really think it well. Mr. Hamilton is a martyr to gout, and I go in sometimes and join them at coffee in a friendly way, and play a game of chess with the old gentleman. But he likes whist best, and cannot often make the table up. Mrs. Hamilton does not play, and Miss Roper, who is Evelyn Raymouth's companion and late governess, is always declining it on plea of headache. When she does take a hand, she exasperates the old gentleman by constantly revoking."

"And you mean that you can introduce me to take a hand? All right, Richmond; when shall I come down?"

"Can you dine with my people to-morrow night, and we will drop in after. But stay," broke off the speaker; "I have promised to go down to St. Albans with Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Raymouth to-morrow."

"Couldn't you get me an invitation to go too?"

Mr. Richmond laughed. "You have caught the fever to some purpose, I think. Perhaps I might manage to get it you. Are you not desperately anxious to do an etching of the shrine, or something of that sort?"

"Desperately anxious," assented Philip.

"Well, it is late, but they are late people," said Mr. Richmond. "I will drop in to-night on Hamilton, in his study; I'll wire to you

at the hotel to-morrow morning. I quite think it will be all right, and if so you can meet us at St. Pancras."

They had now reached the Grand Hotel, and parted with a hearty shake hands.

And at that very time Evelyn Raymouth was seated by her dressing-room fire, more lovely than ever in her flowing white wrapper; and her lips smiled, and the firelight danced in her bonny black eyes.

She was thinking of the stranger who had gathered up her daffodils.

"He certainly was very kind and very good looking," she said, half aloud. "I wonder who he is?" And she began mechanically twisting the curious ring she still wore upon her delicate hand. It was of African workmanship, and had the twelve signs of the zodiac running round it amid a wreath of vine-leaves. As Evelyn touched this ring the contented smile left her face, and she looked down at it.

"I wonder why I *must* wear this ring? why I must always wear it? It is more like a gentleman's than a lady's. And what can be Mr. Hamilton's reason for telling me I must take off my glove in St. Albans Cathedral, and lay my hand upon the shrine, with the ring in sight, at one o'clock? I wonder if he planned to-morrow's expedition on purpose that it should be done? and I wonder if people who suffer from gout have always strange fancies? But I would do more than that to please him. I dare say there is nothing in it, but his word is law to me."

And thought fled from the ring back to the daffodils, and by easy transition to the stranger again.

## II.

THE pleased expression that had come to Evelyn Raymouth's face when she found that Mr. Richmond's friend, for whom he had begged an invitation, was no other than the hero of the concert episode, still lingered upon her fresh young face as the party of four stood before the fine east window of the cathedral. She looked more beautiful than yesterday. Perhaps her thoughts had something to do with it. Philip Hartley was near her, holding a little sketch-book upon his hat. Mrs. Hamilton and Mr. and Mrs. Richmond were discussing "silver-glass" and Norman arches.

Evelyn drew off her glove with a whimsical little smile and looked at the ring. Young Hartley looked at it too. He also saw the smile, and was not pleased with either. He remembered what his friend had said.

At that moment one o'clock sounded.

"Evelyn," said Mrs. Hamilton, "we must go to the shrine."

They had already seen it, but if Mrs. Hamilton wished it, of course they could go again.

This part of the cathedral was gloomy, and the gloom seemed to affect the party. They were all silent enough as Evelyn stretched out

her hand, and laid it upon the shrine. Mrs. Hamilton talked on with Richmond, apparently not noticing that the hand was there.

Philip Hartley's eyes were bent steadily on the little hand, when something—he knew not what, for there was no sound—caused him suddenly to look towards the watch chamber. There, half hidden behind a heavy curtain which covered a doorway, appeared a middle-aged man. His eyes were fixed intently on the young girl, who for her part was wondering what Mr. Hartley would think of this action of hers, and was quite unconscious of the stranger's gaze riveted upon her.

That evening they all dined together at Redcot, Mr. Hamilton's house; and after dinner Evelyn sang "*Soave Imagine d'Amor*" charmingly, and Mr. Hartley sang "*To Anthea*," and meant "*To Evelyn*."

Then the little afternoon tea-table, with its dainty bows of crimson ribbon, was drawn up close to Mr. Hamilton's chair, and the whist cards were laid upon it; and it would have been a most enjoyable evening, only Mr. Molesworth, the artist already alluded to, dropped in unexpectedly and spoilt it all. For after he came a sort of constraint fell upon everyone, which was strange, as he was an old friend. It may have been due to his marked coldness towards young Hartley, who was Evelyn's partner in the game at the time he entered. These young men were destined to meet each other frequently in the days that followed. But their demeanour never changed towards each other.

Philip Hartley often came up to town from Cambridge after this time; and he never came without seeing his friends at Redcot.

Miss Roper, the ex-governess, was of opinion he came too often; but then she was rather a champion of the artist, who had adroitly flattered her water-colour sketches, made when she had been travelling with the family abroad.

There came a day, however, when Miss Roper understood that Mr. Molesworth had no chance with the young lady. She also learnt that he did not wish for a chance. It came about in this way. Mrs. Hamilton and Evelyn, accompanied by Miss Roper, drove out to the Dulwich picture gallery, where Mr. Molesworth had promised to meet them, and give direction, not to say bias, to their opinions on the works of art there. It was the first fine day after a week of pouring rain.

On their way they happened to meet young Hartley. Stopping the carriage to speak to him, and hearing he had nothing to do, they persuaded him to take the vacant place in it and accompany them.

Evelyn's parasol had a pink lining, and the soft reflected colour had a charming effect, so Philip thought. It was during that drive that he resolved to test his fate without more delay. He had ample means to marry upon.

They soon wandered away, he and she, after their arrival, leaving Mr. Molesworth and his auditors, and stood together before the portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the tragic muse, making observations for themselves.

Miss Roper was observing them, however; she felt as certain that love-words were passing as if she had been close by and heard them.

Mr. Molesworth seemed to have the same idea, for he glanced away from Murillo's "Beggar Boys" and spoke sarcastically to the ex-governess. Mrs. Hamilton noticed nothing. She was studying the picture intently through her gold eye-glass.

"So he has committed himself, has he, that fellow! I don't envy him."

In the evening, Philip Hartley dined at Redcot, and after dinner he had an interview with Mr. Hamilton. That over, he left without again seeing Evelyn, at Mr. Hamilton's request.

Afterwards, Mr. Hamilton sent for her to his study. She seated herself at his feet on a low stool, and averted her head, for she was sure she knew what was to be the subject of discussion. Mr. Hamilton passed his hand over the girl's shoulder caressingly. She raised her hand and touched his. It was the hand with the ring on it.

"Evelyn," he said, in a voice checked by emotion, "Mr. Hartley has been to me. I have told him to wait a few days for his answer." Pausing for a moment he then went on. "Evelyn, my dear, the time has come when you are to know all—all that I have kept from you for your ease of heart."

Evelyn held his hand tightly. She felt a fear of what was coming, now that Philip had spoken. Of late years she had known by instinct that there was some unpleasant tale to tell.

"Is it of my father and mother you would speak to me, dear Mr. Hamilton?" she asked, faintly.

"Of one of them, Evelyn; your father. But he will tell you all himself, very shortly."

"Then my father lives!" she cried in surprise: but she did not like to ask why had she never seen him.

"He lives, and he is very ill, my dear; your mother has been long dead. His illness is sudden, as I gather, and dangerous; and he asks for you. The letter came to day while you were at Dulwich."

"Yes?" she said, for he paused.

"You must decide for yourself, Evelyn, whether you will obey his request, or not. He has neglected you for so long that perhaps you——"

"Oh, I will go to him," said the girl, as she burst into tears.

"That is right, child; Miss Roper shall attend you. She can stay at some inn there, I suppose, while you go on to the house: I will tell her. And, Evelyn, I know you will be gentle and forgiving to him. Be your own dear self, and all will be well."



## III.

NEXT day the rain set in afresh as the two travellers started on their journey. Miss Roper, who was, as we have said, liable to sudden headache, which was generally accompanied by a good deal of contrariness, and who had not liked being told she was not to go with Evelyn to the house, had one of her attacks in the train soon after starting.

And when they were only half way to Marshlands, she solemnly declared herself incapable of going another mile. The train was stopping at Brewe now, and she had a sister at Brewe; they had better stay the night and go on in the morning, she pointed out.

Evelyn would not hear of it. "In the morning my poor father may be gone," she pleaded. "He will think he called his own child to his side, and she would not come."

"He has done nothing for you all his life, and has no right to you now—that is my opinion, and you had better wait." And Miss Roper got out of the train, waiting for Evelyn to follow. But she resolutely kept her seat, and before Miss Roper had time to rejoin her, the train steamed out of the station.

Some stations further on, Evelyn changed on to a branch line. A block then occurred, which delayed the train considerably. So it was quite dark when she at last stepped on to the platform of the Marshland station, which was a mere shed of a place. Someone was to meet her to drive her to the village, more than three miles distant. But to her dismay she found no one waiting, although it was so much after the time the train should have arrived. It was clear there was some mistake, possibly occasioned by that same delay. Evelyn enquired for a fly or cab.

"Cab, miss?" returned the station-master, rather sarcastically. "No cabs in these parts; and no horses, for the matter of that. They are never asked for."

"What am I to do?" said Evelyn. "The village is three miles away, I believe, and I don't know the way to it. I might lose myself, and——"

"And," echoed the station-master, with a pause for emphasis, "the floods are out. You could never reach the village to-night."

"But what can I do?" exclaimed Evelyn, feeling ready to cry with perplexity.

"You couldn't stay here," said the station-master, consolingly. "I must close the station presently."

"Only tell me the way and I will go, and risk it," said Evelyn, with all the dignity at her command considering the unpleasant novelty of the position.

The man gave her some directions in an ungracious way, for he thought the expedition one of folly, and concluded with the assurance that she would have to turn back at the first meadow.

Evelyn passed down the country road in the darkness until she

came to a solitary mill, which was her first land-mark. Near this she had been told there was a stile leading into the low meadows. She found the stile and crossed it, and was soon conscious that she was walking in water, and as she went further it seemed to be getting deeper. She almost ran in her fear, and in her longing to bear on.

"What does it matter?" she said, half aloud. "My father, who may be on his dying bed, is waiting for me."

But very soon she heard the sound of dashing water, almost as the waves of a sea. She turned about in her uncertainty, not knowing the right direction at all. It had ceased raining, and suddenly the moon shone out from amid a bank of angry clouds. It revealed a rushing torrent before her, and a waste of waters far reaching on every side, rapidly rising. Any way might lead her out of her depth. Yet to stay where she was seemed certain death. The water had even now reached to her knees.

In her terror and despair she cried aloud, and clasped her hands as if in appeal to Heaven. The moon, which had hidden itself after a brief moment, now shone out again, and by its light Evelyn saw she was no longer alone: another wayfarer was breasting the torrent with herself. A tall gentleman, and he stood by her side; and before she had recovered from her astonishment, or her wonder at how he came there, he spoke.

"Do not fear, my child," said he. "Only trust me. I will take you safely on the way you wish to go."

The moon lit up the speaker's face. Evelyn, scanning it, saw that it was a very pale but kind face. In moments of peril such as this, we throw off the restraints of reserve; and Evelyn told him who she was, and how she came to be here alone and the place of her destination, and why she was going to it.

"Keep close to me and fear nothing," he said in answer: and Evelyn thought the voice was a more singular one than she had ever heard. The moon went in again, and they were wrapt in darkness: but the fear at her heart was gone, and trust had taken its place.

A strange, weird walk it was. The swollen stream passed in safety, their way lay along stone hedge-tops, with the water on either side blown up by the fierce wind which had suddenly risen. Then another angry stream had to be crossed. It almost seemed to Evelyn as if she were going along in a dream. Her companion did not touch her, yet he piloted her onward in safety. In some places they had to leap from stone to stone, yet no false step was made. Then followed long stretches of glimmering, nearly silent water, through which they walked easily.

"How well you must know the way!" exclaimed Evelyn at last to this good friend, who had remained silent after his first remarks.

He answered by extending his arm to point forwards; and she saw the lights of the village.

"Oh, how glad I am to see them," said the girl, with a sigh of

relief. "You will come in, when we get there, and let my father thank you?" she added, warmly. "He wanted me so very much; he is ill, as I mentioned to you. I am sure he will like to thank you. But for you I should never have got here. I should most likely have died."

"You do not know your father," he coldly said.

"No," said Evelyn, wondering; for she had not told him that. She was more at ease now that they were walking in the muddy lane, and began to consider her guide.

"Do you know my father?" she at length asked.

"I do," was the reply. "Child, if you knew that he had deeply wronged you, how should you feel towards him?"

"He would still be my father," said Evelyn, softly.

"And if you knew that he had sorrowed day and night, night and day for his sin—could you forgive him? Child, could you forgive him?"

It did not seem to Evelyn strange that this man, who had already done so much for her, should be speaking to her in this way of her father. It was all part of the same bewildering dream of which this stranger's kindness had been the light.

"I forgive my father?" she at length said, simply. "I have nothing to do with forgiving. I have nothing to give *my father* but love."

Even as she spoke they came to a cottage, and she knew intuitively that it was her destination. Evelyn stepped upon the threshold, and turned to say something to her guide.

But she did not see him. To her intense astonishment she was alone. She gazed around, but he was not to be seen; he seemed to have vanished in the same mysterious manner that he had come.

It was her father's door to which he had conducted her, she felt certain of that, and she knocked softly at it. She saw a glimmer of light through a window, and waited; but no one came to answer her. At length she tried the handle of the door. It was not fastened, and she went in gently—not to a passage or hall, but to a room: half sitting-room, half bedroom. Upon a chest of drawers a lamp burned low. In the grate were the ashes of a dead fire. Upon the bed someone was lying, covered by a blue quilt; no doubt her father. No one else was in the room. Evelyn closed the door, and moved towards the bed. Why were the clothes covering him so completely? She lifted the quilt from the face, and then she uttered a startled cry: it was the face of a corpse. And, more than this—it was the face of her strange guide.

Recovering, as she best could, the shock, she threw herself upon the bed and stroked the dead face with her cold, trembling hands, and cried piteously to the ears that were now for ever deaf. "Father, father, I have come! Come to love you, to care for you—too late. Why did you not send for me earlier? Oh, my father!" She burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping. Her cry brought forth an old nurse from the kitchen, who took in the situation at once.

"You be too late, miss," she said. "You be his daughter, I reckon. He died at 8 o'clock; an hour and a half ago."

"I left the station at 8 o'clock," cried Evelyn, turning from beside the bed, where she was now standing. "Oh, why did he not send before? I came as soon as I heard it; as soon as I could come."

"The illness was pretty sudden, you see; 'twas only a day or two ago that danger was thought of. And I don't see how you can have got here at all," the woman went on, with a look of perplexity. "The floods are out."

Evelyn had covered her face with her hands, weeping bitterly.

"He got restless and anxious," continued the old servant, "after the doctor, when he paid his last visit early in the evening, said the waters were out, and that nobody must attempt to cross from Marshlands Station, for if they did they'd never get here alive. Dreadful restless for an hour or two, he was," she added, glancing round at the bed. "But he went off very peaceful at the last."

And there was a peaceful look on the dead face after all, and Evelyn reverently covered it with a feeling that it was well with him.

Then Evelyn allowed the good old woman to give her dry clothes and refreshments. But she heard little of her conversation, except that the gentleman had bought the land on which this cottage stood, and was living in it while he built himself a suitable house. He had not very long come from Africa, so the woman understood.

But, seeing the girl's weariness, she prepared a bed for her; and Evelyn, utterly exhausted, slept.

The following March, Evelyn and Philip Hartley, now man and wife, wandered in the green meadows, near the sea shore of a certain fishing village. Research and pleasure had combined to bring them here. They had been married soon after Evelyn's strange adventure.

Mr. Hamilton had wished to explain what his adopted child would have learnt had she not been too late. But Mr. Hartley had begged him to tell nothing. Evelyn added her entreaties to his; and nothing was told, except that the African ring had belonged to her father, and that he had seen her by arrangement at St. Albans.

As the young couple walked, they came suddenly upon a bank of daffodils. The flowers recalled their first meeting.

"Evelyn," said her husband, tenderly, "the daffodil is like no other flower to me. As I see you, and know you are my own, I can scarcely believe my good fortune:

"And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils."

JEANIE GWYNNE BETTANY.

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M. L. GOW.

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"WHY, JOCK? WHAT *DID* YOU HEAR?"